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ROYAL WINDSOR

BY

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VOLUME II.

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ROYAL WINDSOR.

CHAPTER I.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

1390.

In the year of grace thirteen hundred and ninety, things were happening in the world, both in and out of Windsor, which were thought of so much moment, that they were sure, in coming ages, to excite the wonder of mankind.

No less a hero than Peter de Courtney, son of the great earl of Devon, and brother of the proud archbishop of Canterbury, came to Windsor as Constable; a king's man, true to his royal master and himself; yet of such moderate views that he was equally acceptable to the duke of Lancaster. His presence at the Castle seemed a pledge of peace between his majesty and the royal duke. Valeran, count de St. Pol, the king's brother-in-

law, was entertained at feast and joust; a secret agent, but who brought with him proposals for a truce with France; a policy opposed to that of the duke of Lancaster, and of the existing government. William of Ostrevant, nephew of Queen Philippa, came to Windsor for the festival of St. George, and, carrying off the prize of horsemanship, was there created a knight of the Garter; a fact which stirred up jealousy between the courts of Paris and Valenciennes, and led the French and Flemings to the verge of war; an evil only turned aside by Ostrevant giving up his Garter and submitting to his feudal lord. King Richard, in a fit of superstition, fearing the enmity of St. Cuthbert, sent an order from Windsor to dedicate a royal jewel at the shrine of that offended saint. Contrary to the wish of Lancaster, commissioners were appointed to treat of terms with Charles the Sixth. Aquitaine was first given to, and then recalled from, Lancaster; a cause, taken in connexion with the secret intercourse conducted by St. Pol, of long and fatal animosity between the sovereign and his warlike uncle. Henry of Bolingbroke, heart-weary for the loss of his young wife, came to Windsor, to the chapel of St. George, to lay his sword beside the altar of that saint, ere

setting out on that memorable service of the cross, in which he was to fight against the Moslems in Barbary and the pagans on the Baltic coast—to visit Sinai, Jerusalem, and St. George—to win that reputation as a knight and pilgrim which a few years later was to bear him to the English throne.

Outside of Windsor, yet connected with the course of English policy, other and perhaps greater things were happening in that year of grace. Boniface, pope of Rome, recognised as pontiff by England, hurled his anathema at Clement, pope of Avignon, recognised as pontiff by France. Clement, pope of Avignon, recognised as pontiff by France, hurled his anathema at Boniface, pope of Rome, recognised as pontiff by England. Don Juan of Castile died; and in spite of English victories, his son Enrique the Valetudinarian mounted his uneasy throne; a seat that rocked and reeled beneath his weight, until he reconciled himself to John of Lancaster, by marrying Lady Catalina, only child of Doña Constanza of Castile by the English duke. Sir John Hawkwood, the famous English free-lance, fighting for the Florentines, was defending Padua against Bolingbroke's friend, the duke of Milan. John Chaplet, a second, and

hardly less famous, free-lance, was serving with distinction as captain of the Venetian land forces. Sultan Bajazet was pushing on his conquests, beating down the Christian armies, and preparing for that fatal onset of Nicopolis in which the chivalry of France was to succumb as in a second Poictiers, and Henry of Bolingbroke, escaping from the general ruin, was to close the cycle of his services to the cross.

Yet all these noisy doings have retreated from the eyes and thoughts of men—taking their rank as dreams and visions of a night long passed—while one small fact, unnoted at the period, entered on no tablet of the passing annalist, is still a personal concern to educated men in every corner of the earth.

That small, unchronicled event was the arrival in Windsor on a summer day of a quaint and humorous old man, called Geoffrey Chaucer, known as a romantic poet, with a patent under his girdle naming him Master of the King's Works, and giving him directions to repair the chapel of St. George.

What that old man was like in face and figure, as he ambled into Windsor on that summer day, we have the means of seeing in two separate pictures;

pictures which, drawn at the time, and by two master-hands, admit of no dispute and no appeal. Thomas Occleve, friend of Geoffrey Chaucer, painted him in outline, and Occleve's portrait of the poet is extant. The poet likewise made a picture of himself in words. These portraits paint him as he lived in ordinary flesh, and looked in ordinary clothes—about the time of his arrival in Windsor to commence his labours on St. George's roof and wall.

A round and buoyant man, with drooping and reflective brows, and somewhat elfish cast of face, was Geoffrey Chaucer, poet laureate and master of the king's works. His frame, though pliant, budded out; more like the figure of an Oxford friar than that of a trooper who had ridden over tented fields, and borne the privations of a foreign jail. A charm of charms lurked in his face; a face of Saxon pink and white, oval in shape, with strong and well-set nose, short upper lip, quivering with hidden mirth, light eyebrows, and a line of pale moustache. His locks were silver-grey. A fringe of hair, escaping from his hood, hung down his cheek from brow to ear. A thin and grey moustache curled round into his beard, which was bi-furked and short. The countenance, so gentle that a

stranger might have called it feminine, was lighted up by eyes as deep as night, as quick as fire ; a wondrous pair of eyes, in which the flame was never latent and implied, but burning with a steadfast glow. Soft, radiant, frolicsome, was the whole expression of that face.

Though booted as a king's esquire, the poet was arrayed, not in a soldier's cap and coat, but in a hood and gown. The gown was caught in slackly by a belt. Like his face, the rider's body seemed made for ease and thought ; for either slow, monotonous hours of prayer, or service in a reader's desk. A collar passed about his throat. His gown was dark in hue and open at the breast. A string of beads hung from his fingers ; evidence of his piety, and perhaps his pilgrimage. That quaint old man had knelt before the martyr's shrine ; that quaint old man had sung the Canterbury Tales. And he was like the fame he bore ; in spite of boot and spur, he looked from head to foot more like a Benedictine father than a trooper from the camps in France.

Chaucer was no stranger to the royal hill. Years of his life had been spent about the royal house, St. George's chapel, and the Norman keep, in the company of his handsome and accom-

plished wife. Twenty-three years ago, Edward of Windsor had taken the poet into his service as a valet of the king's household, giving him a pension of twenty marks a-year. This pension was assigned for life. Chaucer was then mature and famous; thirty-six years old; boasting of no small repute in arms and of a great repute in verse.

Serving as a young man with Edward in his French campaign, Chaucer, in the ardour of adventure, had been taken by the French; and as a gentleman, wearing arms, had been held to ransom by his captors, who might otherwise have brained him on the spot. When he regained his liberty, the king, regarding him as a soldier who had done his duty and had suffered in his cause, took him into his service and placed him near his person, with the rank of valet. No one but a gentleman could be a king's valet; the post being that of a modern gentleman of the chamber. In his place of valet, Chaucer came with the king to Windsor, where he lived during many years; so that the Norman keep, the royal chapel, the Devil's tower, the Maid of Honour's garden, and the Constable's lodgings were familiar objects in his sight. At court, Chaucer had met and won his wife Philippa, daughter of Sir Paon de Roet, a Flemish knight

who had accompanied Queen Philippa into England, and had found a noble patron in the king's son, John of Lancaster. Sir Paon had two daughters, Catharine and Philippa; girls as fair in face and fascinating in manner, as they were learned in music and accomplished in all liberal arts. Catharine, who married early, and was early left a widow, was appointed by John of Lancaster the governess of his young children—his son, Henry of Bolingbroke, and his two daughters, Lady Philippa and Lady Elizabeth of Lancaster; a domestic charge which led the young widow into intimate and perilous intercourse with the duke. Philippa, the younger sister, was at court, attending on the queen.

In and about the royal house and Maid of Honour's garden, Chaucer, the king's valet, had encountered Philippa, the queen's damosel. Falling in love and plighting troth, the grown-up valet and the younger damosel had taken to each other for good and ill. The king and queen consenting to the match, they had been married at court. After their marriage they had remained at Windsor Castle, in the royal service; Chaucer staying with the king, and Philippa with the queen. Instead of being the queen's maiden,

Philippa had become the queen's gentle-woman, and received her wages from her majesty in her name and quality as the poet's wife.

Two sons were born to them; first, Thomas, and, second, Louis. Thomas lived to become a famous man; knight, councillor, speaker, and much more. Louis, the child for whom the poet wrote his treatise on the Astrolabe, died young.

While Queen Philippa lived, the poet's wife had remained with her at Windsor and Westminster. On her demise, the poet and his wife had left Windsor for the Savoy, where they were called into a new service; Chaucer into that of Lancaster; his wife into that of the duke's second consort, Doña Constanza of Castile.

By this time Catharine de Roet had become a mother; mother of that John de Beaufort who was destined to become the father of our permanent line of English kings. Lancaster owned his child, and treated him like a prince. The fact of bastardy was held to be of slight account; for almost every prince in Christendom brought up his children, whether born in wedlock or out of wedlock, under a common roof. Bolingbroke, the son of duchess Elinor, never dreamt of treating John de Beaufort, son of Catharine de Roet, otherwise than as his

brother. They were both their father's sons. Reared together, the only visible line dividing them was the fact that Henry stood by law, and John did not stand by law—as yet—in order of succession to the crown.

John de Beaufort was the nephew of Chaucer's wife, first cousin of Chaucer's sons.

Philippa was now removed from the poet's side. Louis, their younger son, was dead. Thomas had become a busy man. Widowed and alone, Chaucer came back to Windsor, where he found his feet on old and pleasant ground—the wards and gardens in which the king's valet had courted the queen's maiden, and the two young people, in the spring-time of their life, had plighted to each other an abiding troth.

CHAPTER II.

AT WINCHESTER TOWER.

1390.

WINCHESTER tower, a massive and irregular building, rising from the northern rampart, close besides the deanery and cloister, had been erected by William of Wykeham, on the site of Henry the Third's unlucky pile. Three stories high, standing athwart the wall, and capped with vane and turret, this edifice enters into every picture of the Castle, and is one of its most catching points. The rooms are good, the leads delightful; looking over slope and river, wood and pasture land, as far away as the eye can pierce.

Here, between the great chapel and the new king's house in the upper ward, Wykeham had lodged; and here the successors of Wykeham, down to Wyatville, have also lodged. Chaucer, one of these successors, would have to lodge during

his Windsor residence as master of the king's works, in Winchester tower.

Thirty years ago, when Wykeham had been toiling at his edifice, Chaucer, the king's valet, was living in the king's house; whence he could see the pinnacles rise, the traceries flow and flower, the windows spring and arch; very much as Dante, from his seat in the cathedral square, had seen the wondrous wall and belfry rise from the earth in Florence, under the inspiring touch of Giotto. One imagines that, like Dante and Giotto, the English poet and the English architect were friends.

When St. George's chapel had been roofed, the written treasures of the king's house — not unknown, one sees, to the king's laureate — had been removed into the sacred edifice. One of these written treasures was that Roman de la Rose, which Chaucer's genius had kindled and fused into English verse. Into that tale, his Romaunt of the Rose, he had thrown a brief allusion to his master, King Edward, and to that master's birthplace, Windsor:

> By her danced a bachelor;
> I cannot tell you what he hight,
> But fair he was and of good height,

All had he be (I say no more)
The lord's son of Windesore.

King Edward was of course the lord of Windsor, and his son, so fair and tall, was equally of course the Black Prince. Had there been answer from his highness to this compliment? Yes; very pleasant, very memorable, answer: the creation, on St. George's day, of a new office—that of poet laureate—in connexion with the Castle and the saint.

On St. George's day, April 23, 1374, King Edward, in a royal patent, dated Windsor, had created Geoffrey Chaucer his poet-laureate—a martial man, the singer of a martial age. To cheer his lusty singer, the king had granted him a pitcher of wine for every day in the year; a gift to be received in the king's name from the royal butler as long as the poet-laureate lived and sang. But that heroic day was gone with the great king. Crécy and Poictiers were nigh forgotten. St. George had all but sunk into the earth. A poet-laureate, singing of noble deeds and gallant men in the reign of Vere, was out of place. Nor was it better under the supremacy of Gloucester. Only after Lancaster's separation from his brother, had the poet gained so great a post as that of master of the works.

A few weeks after the affair at Radcote bridge, a feud had broken out between the dukes of Lancaster and Gloucester, which involved their clients and retainers in the strife. Words ran so high between the royal dukes, that every one had to choose his side and stand with either one or other of the disputants. The poet and his family stood with Lancaster. A lady was the cause of quarrel; no less a lady than the young and wealthy Mary de Bohun, known to us as the fair young wife—so dearly loved, so early lost—of Bolingbroke, and as the mother of his son, the still more splendid hero of Agincourt.

Lady Mary was the younger of two sisters, only issue left by Humphrey de Bohun, late earl of Essex and Hereford; a man who died possessed of lands and castles in many shires—Pleshy in Essex, Monmouth on the Welsh border, Leicester in the midland counties, and the great London house known as Cole Harbour, in Dowgate ward.

Lady Elinor, the elder girl, had married the duke of Gloucester, who, in right of his consort, had received the Constable's staff, the earldom of Essex, the strong fortress of Pleshy, and other dignities and estates. Gloucester's greed was sharp,

but he was almost gorged. Yet he had hardly taken up his prizes ere his heart began to hanker after more. One half the dead man's dignities and manors fell to the younger daughter, Lady Mary; including the coronet of Hereford, the castle at Monmouth, the honour of Leicester, and the big house in London. Lady Mary being a child, needing no London residence, Gloucester and his duchess had entered in her name and taken up their dwelling in Cole Harbour, as a place that suited them; the house being vast, with a large river front, and gardens climbing up the slope toward Thames Street.

In a little while, Gloucester had begun to find that the whole inheritance of Lady Mary suited him. Asking himself how Lady Mary might be robbed, the answer had come too quickly. Lady Mary might be robbed as other orphan girls were then robbed, by edging her into a convent and inducing her to take the veil. Bohun, her father, had appointed the duke of Lancaster to be Lady Mary's guardian. Lancaster and himself were then on friendly terms. In order to obtain possession of the girl, he had only to suggest that the best course for Lady Mary was to come to Pleshy and receive her education under her sister's care. At

Pleshy they could turn her as they pleased. Three or four sisters from the neighbouring convent of St. Clare would do their work on her. The duchess had joined him in his scheme. Having an infant son, Lord Humphrey, called after her father, Elinor was longing to hail this son by her father's second title, as earl of Hereford ; the honour which had fallen to her sister's share. Lancaster, being unsuspicious, had allowed the child to be removed to Pleshy ; the plan of educating her in her sister's house seeming to him an excellent education for his infant ward.

A wing of Pleshy had been prepared for Lady Mary's use, and furnished partly as a chapel, partly as a school. Sisters of St. Clare had been brought into the house, and given to Lady Mary as her teachers and her friends. Young, tender, dutiful, the girl had fallen under the sway of nuns and priests. Gloucester, looking on, had scored his game. So many months, and she would pass into the cloister, skilfully prepared for her by these obliging nuns. In truth, the girl was ripening for a convent, when she had met (by accident, as she supposed) her young and dashing cousin, Henry of Bolingbroke. Lancaster, awaken-

ing slowly to the situation, had contrived this meeting, which took place at Arundel castle. He had heard of Gloucester's treachery to the girl, and having once begun to think of Lady Mary, had been struck by the advantages which she offered to his son. Lady Mary was fifteen; Bolingbroke twenty-one. Lady Mary's town-house and country manors exactly suited Bolingbroke. A whisper to a female relative had brought Lady Mary on a visit to her aunt at Arundel castle. Bolingbroke, as if by accident, had joined the party. In a week the nuns and priests of Pleshy had been distanced. Bolingbroke and Lady Mary were in love.

Lancaster consented to the match, and being Lady Mary's guardian, his consent sufficed for them. In spite of Gloucester's anger—and that anger broke on them in wrath and scorn—Mary had married her hero; and a year after her bridal day, she was the happy mother of a second hero, that Harry of Monmouth who was afterwards to become so gracious as Madcap Hal, so glorious as Harry of Agincourt.

Gloucester had parted company from his brother and that brother's son, denouncing them as robbers who had come on him like robbers in the

night, breaking into his house, and stealing away the treasure from his hearth.

This feud had made the poet's fortune; for the headlong duke, parting from his able brother and still abler nephew, had been overthrown. A change of government brought Chaucer to the royal hill.

His patent, as master of the king's works at Windsor, bore the date of July 12, 1390; a short time after Wykeham, the original architect, returned to office as lord chancellor. The new master may have been chosen by the architect; must have been chosen with his knowledge and assent. Wykeham was not a man to suffer an incompetent person to repair a work so splendid and so famous as his chapel of St. George.

How had the new occupant of Winchester tower been qualified for such a task? Had he, beyond his power of word and thought—his grasp of character, his depth of humour, his expanse of vision—the skill of an architect and engineer? That he could build the lofty rhyme we know. How had he learned to build the lofty tower and roof the open nave? We judge a man by what he does, much as we judge a tree by what it bears.

Chaucer's employment by the crown at Windsor

Castle, on St. George's chapel, was not his first employment as an architect and engineer. Twelve months ago, soon after Wykeham returned to office, he had been appointed clerk of the king's works in other places. His patent, bearing date at Windsor, gave into his charge, as architect, the palace of Westminster, the Tower of London, and the hunting-lodge at Shene. Windsor excepted, all the palaces and manors in the southern shires were under his control; the palaces at Eltham and Kennington, the castles of Berkhampstead and Clarendon, the manors of Byfleet and Chiltern-Langley, the lodges at Feckenham and Hatherberg, with the falconries at Charing Cross. His pay was two shillings a-day; and he had power to name a deputy; the duty of attending to these palaces and lodges being too great for any single man to undertake.

The works at Windsor needed a master's eye. In Chaucer's commission to repair the chapel of St. George, the clause permitting him to name a deputy was omitted. Chaucer was to guide the works himself; an article in which one feels a trace of the original builder's hand and eye.

Yet one has seen the poet's warrant treated as a sham! Why so? Shams, sinecures, dead offices,

were things of later growth. No doubt, his friends were high in power. But Wykeham regarded this Windsor chapel as his favourite child. The Lancastrians had a hundred ways of helping such a man as Chaucer, without giving him a post for which he was unfit. Wykeham could have found him twenty places in the court of chancery; and would have found them quickly, to prevent a person who was ignorant of the building art from laying his fingers on the walls and rafters of St. George. Nor was the poet likely to accept a sham. Neither in his life nor in his writing is there anything to suggest that he was wanting in the ordinary honesty of men. Before the poet can be charged with acting on a spurious patent, and receiving pay for work not done, he must be proved by evidence, not yet discovered, to have been a cheat.

The builder's art was then regarded as a noble, even a royal art, the proper study and profession of a liberal mind. Kings were of the craft, and many learned clerks were architects, no less proud of their skill in raising church and cloister, keep and palace, than of their dexterity in supporting the theses of Duns Scotus and demolishing the heresies of Wycliffe and Montesono. Henry the

Third and Edward of Windsor had been masters of the craft. Gundulf had been a great architect; William of Sens had been a still greater architect. Many prelates had proved excellent builders. Puiset had left some noble work in York; Trotman, yet nobler work at Wells. Wykeham was the living representative of a line of learned men, who, bishops and chancellors by profession, had become architects and engineers from choice. Travel and study had turned their fancies to the craft, and their frequent journeys through France and Italy on the way to Rome had given them opportunities for comparing, one with another, the most famous edifices in the world.

Chaucer was like those priests in being a travelled man. Not only had he seen St. George's chapel rise from the ground, but, like the travelling priests, was able to compare that fabric with the most famous specimens of building art. Westminster Abbey was known to him by heart. Rochester and Canterbury were hardly less familiar to his eye. He knew Antwerp and Bruges. More than once, he had passed through Rheims and Chartres. With Rouen and Paris he was well acquainted. If the faculty were in him, there had

been no lack of good examples to inspire his art. Chaucer had paced the colonnades of Genoa, and compared the palaces and baptistries of Pisa with those of Florence. He had lodged in Padua, in the shadow of St. Antonio. Was he a man to let such chances slip?

That Chaucer was a man of many parts, we know. Lover of books and learning, he was not the less a man of arms. Student of law, and member of the Inner Temple, he was not the less a royal valet, paying personal service to the king. Knight of the shire for Kent, he was not the less an officer of excise, engaged in the practical duty of taking the king's dues and writing out receipts. Poet-laureate, scanning verse and drinking largess, he was not the less an agent of the king in foreign courts. Edward had sent him to Flanders, France, and Genoa, on public business. Richard had employed his talents in confidential missions to the court of Charles and to the camp of Hawkwood. Take him in the round, Chaucer was a man of great capacity for work, and work of many kinds. He was a soldier; he was a lawyer; he was a courtier; he was an exciseman; he was an ambassador. Why may he not have also been an architect?

But, whether an adept in the craft or not, the poet came to Windsor in the days of Wykeham's chancellorship, with the king's commission, given to him by his Lancastrian friends, as master of his majesty's works.

CHAPTER III.

ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL.

1390–1.

WHEN Chaucer entered on his task, the chapel of St. George, like the great kingdom of which that saint was now become the patron, lay in a state of waste.

Only thirty-four years had passed since the great architect had laid the first stone of his Gothic edifice; but those thirty-four years had been years of court intrigue and civil strife, when hardly anything was preserved. St. George was not the saint of Richard and of Vere, nor were his services the religious life of Richard's court. His festivals were rarely kept. The knightly jousts and feasts were failing in display. St. George's chapel—standing in the lower ward—was a deserted pile, on which the wind and rain were left to do their deadly work. The roof was falling in,

the walls and floors required new masonry and tiles Built on a sloping ground, chapel and cloister were suffering from the slip of chalk, much as the towers and curtains near the ledge had suffered from the slip of chalk. The poet's warrant spoke of haste, hot haste; haste with the woodmen and quarrymen; haste with the diggers, and the masons, and the carpenters; haste with the tilers, and the plumbers, and the plasterers, and the decorators. If the works were not pushed on, the beautiful chapel of the knights was likely to come down—a heap of rubbish on the Castle hill.

Within—though worn by wind and rain—St. George's shrine was worthy of a national saint. A light and lofty shell, with oaken ceiling, in the Gothic style, as English Gothic passed into the 'perpendicular,' and, like St. Stephen's chapel, painted with the brightest chrome and plated with the richest gold, covered in the four great altars. These altars were:—first, the altar of the Cross; second, the altar of the Thorn; third, the altar of St. Edward; fourth, the altar of St. George. These four great altars were of gold and silver, ivory and cedar-wood. To the desks and lecterns costly and pictorial books were chained;

hours and services, homilies, romances, and poems. Nobody save the clergy read; and all these books were worth their weight in gold. The shrine was rich in gifts. Our Lady of Walsingham, and St. Thomas of Canterbury, might boast of more curious relics than St. George of Windsor; but the list of books and vestments, swords and jewels, in St. George's keeping, was already long and rich.

Above the four great altars, branching from the wall, were gold and silver caskets. One such casket held an arm-bone of St. George; a second, an arm-bone of St. William of York. These relics were exposed, and might be seen by pious pilgrims. Under the altar-table, in a deep recess, were cups and phials, in which were kept some Virgin's milk, and broken bits of the skulls of St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew the apostles. Placed apart, and more accessible to pilgrims, were a second bone of St. George, a chip from the Last Supper table, and a splinter from Our Lady's tomb. There were bones of St. Margaret, queen of Scots; a rib of one of the eleven thousand companions of St. Ursula; a white belt given by John the Evangelist to St. Mary; part of the brains of St. Eustace, and the jaw-bone of St.

Mark. Among this crowd of sacred things, all priceless in the eyes of faith, were a rib of St. Vitale, bones of St. David and St. Elizabeth, a shirt of St. Thomas, and a candle end which had been lighted by Our Lady of Nazareth.

Before the growing reputation of St. George displaced the minor sanctities at Windsor, the most precious altars were the two side chapels, known as the altar of the Thorn, and the altar of the Cross. In Chaucer's day the first was gone. The altar of the Cross remained.

Like the Black Rood of Scotland, now, by the returning flux of war, become the property of St. Cuthbert, the Cross of St. George's chapel had a second and a personal name. This cross was commonly called the Neyt.

A Welsh pilgrim of the middle ages was supposed to have brought this relic from the Holy Land. That pilgrim's name was Neyt, or Neyth. He had given the talisman to his native prince, then standing out against the English crown. For years the bit of Syrian wood had acted as a charm and a defence for Wales. When Edward the First had entered Wales, Avion ap Ivor, seeing that his country was subdued, had given that sacred cross, the sign of sovereignty,

to King Edward of England, as his future lord. Edward had brought the cross to Windsor, where he had placed it in his private chapel, prayed before it, made his offerings to it. Edward was so enchanted by his prize, that he had carried the relic on his journeys, and would hardly leave it out of sight. When Windsor was his home, he had kept his relic there; and after many wanderings, up and down the land, from castle to castle, from battle-field to battle-field, the chip of sovereignty had settled in the chapel of St. George.

Among the minor properties of St. George, were crosses, corporals, pixes, candlesticks, thuribles, phials, dishes, altar-cloths, mitres, chrismatories, bells and staves, auriculars, towels, albs, stoles, veils, and curtains. No less valued by the multitude were the swords of famous kings and captains: the sword of King Edward, the sword of King Richard, the sword of John of Lancaster, and—last, not least in popularity—the sword of Bolingbroke, laid up at Windsor Castle when that noble pilgrim, broken by sorrow for his fair young wife, went forth to battle for the Cross—fighting not only with the Moors of Africa, but with the pagans of the Baltic coast.

The fight against the Pagan Letts and Wends

—then being fought by Conrad and his Teutonic knights—seized hold on Chaucer; who, in the beginning of his Canterbury Tales, made his ideal knight a soldier in that cause:

> Aboven alle nations in Pruce,
> In Lettow had he reysed and in Ruce.
> No Christen man so oft in his degree.

That fight was represented by the sword of Bolingbroke, laid up at Windsor on the altar of St. George.

Chaucer's commission to repair the chapel ran in the usual form. He was empowered to seek out woodmen, carpenters, and masons, both in town and country, and to seize them, in the king's name, for his royal service. No man was exempt from his arresting power, unless he were employed on either church or priory. The wages of his captured workmen were fixed by royal order. If a digger or a joiner ran away, thinking of higher wages in a meaner service, he was subject to arrest by the sheriff, and imprisonment during the king's pleasure. Cole-house in Windsor and Newgate in London were choked with runagates from the royal works. No person was allowed to shelter and employ absconding men. Even priests

and monks were held to strict account; and, whether he were clerk or layman, any person proved to have given shelter or employment to a craftsman who had slipt away from the work on St. George's chapel, was condemned to forfeit the whole of his goods.

Pharaoh's task-master had hardly greater power over the servile labourers of the Nile, than King Richard's poet-laureate had the right to exercise, under the terms of his commission, over the free craftsmen of the Thames.

Chaucer had an equal power to seek for his building materials, and to take them when and where he found them, whether the owners liked or not. Timber and stone, mortar and lead, paint and glass, he was to take at his own price, going into shop and store as he saw fit; and sending any saucy fellow who said him nay, to learn submission to a master of the king's works in the common jail. In like manner, he was authorised to seize the means of carriage—horses, wagons, carts, and men to drive them—all at his own price and time.

Under such a system work was quickly done. The chapel of St. George was soon restored. Chaucer held his Windsor office for a year and

some months; but on the fall of Wykeham, his connexion with the chapel ceased—so far as such a man could ever be separated from a work once done by him. Where Chaucer lived, he will remain. When Wykeham fell, he quitted Winchester tower; but while the Castle stands, the name and personality of Geoffrey Chaucer will haunt the rooms and passages of that tower.

That personality was vast and high. Chaucer was, in truth, a man—all eye and ear, all nerve and thew, all brain and soul. Force broke from him on every side. While he was serving with the king in France, he rode beyond the limits, and was captured by the enemy. But his unbounded energies turned mishaps to benefits. While lying in restraint, he learnt the habits of his captors, and acquired a perfect mastery of French. When Edward sent him on a mission to Florence, he crossed the Appennines on his own account, passing through hostile armies, in the hope of seeing Petrarch in the neighbourhood of Padua. Apart from his dramatic powers, one feels that Chaucer was a vital force; a man with talents and resources lying far beyond the scope of ordinary rules.

His points were contrasts. In his person he

was small of size and mild of aspect; yet his will was high, his spirit daring; and the gentle bard, 'a poppet fair of face,' as he described himself, fit only for a girl 'to twine her arms about,' was the most manly of all singers, and his song the essence of all lusty life.

The contrasts which beset him in his life have haunted him since he died.

Opinions in direct and open warfare have been held by eminent critics as to Chaucer's use of his magnificent gifts. Gower extolled his lines as musical; Dryden denounced them as harsh and rugged. Spenser referred to his writings as a well of English undefiled, while Verstegan contended that these writings have debased the English speech.

Such is the fate of our immortals. We dispute about them; they remain the same. We pass away, and they are fixed like stars.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITTLE QUEEN.

1396.

DAINTIEST of all the dainty queens that ever came to Windsor, was the infant Isabel de Valois, called by the poëts and chroniclers of her time Madame La Petite Reine.

When Madame Isabel was first proposed for her unhappy dignity, as queen of England, she was barely seven years old. When she arrived at Windsor Castle, she was hardly nine. When she was overthrown and driven from Windsor, she was not yet twelve; and when, discrowned and exiled, she returned to France, she was but fourteen years and eight months old. A drama, dark and ominous, began and ended for the Little Queen at Windsor Castle, while other children of her age were playing in the nursery and conning their lessons in the school.

Born in the Louvre, a child of Charles the Sixth, La Petite Reine seemed marked for any fate on earth rather than that of coming to Windsor Castle as a bride to Richard of Bordeaux. No soldier in Paris dreamt of making peace with England; few councillors in Windsor dreamt of making peace with France. The people, like the armies and the dynasties, were at war. Strife between French and English was regarded on both sides of Dover straits as the natural state of things. But Richard, timid in his nature and without accomplishments in war, was listening to St. Pol's advice. His uncle Lancaster and his cousin Bolingbroke were gaining much renown in arms. Peace suited him as king—war suited them as captains hoping to be kings.

Even before Queen Anne, the 'sister of Augustus,' passed away from Windsor, Richard had received St. Pol. When Anne was gone, St. Pol had taken other ground. A truce, he urged, might lead to peace; and peace might end in an alliance of the reigning kings.

Madame Isabel was fair, and of a novel type of female loveliness. The families of all reigning kings were fair; the girls with pink and white complexions, yellow locks, and soft blue eyes.

Such was the type at Windsor, Paris, and Copenhagen: such the type at Prague, Toledo, and Vienna. Only the Italian dukes and princes were of darker type. But Madame Isabel, while fair of skin as any Saxon princess, had a pair of black and luminous eyes. Her mother, Isabeau, the daughter of a German prince and a Milanese princess, had a swarthy tint and raven locks. In Isabel, the north and south had met in their most happy mood: her father's fairness having blent in the most startling manner with her mother's fire. Unlike the king her father, she had raven hair, a graceful figure, and a head that sat on her shoulders like a work of art. In mind, too, as in body, all that was best in both her parents seemed to have gathered in their child. Good, like her father, clever like her mother—she had none of the weakness which impaired her father's virtues, none of the vices which defiled her mother's talent. She was neither foolish like the king, nor wicked like the queen.

In spite of lax example in her home, Madame Isabel was a bright and innocent child, with grave and elfin ways; in which cynical observers saw the coquette of nine or ten, playing her part of queen, as other girls of nine or ten might play

their parts in a procession or a masque. Her face was sweet, and her expression arch: fire and frolic darting under long black lashes from her great Italian orbs. Surrounded by intrigue and strife—at Paris first, at Windsor afterwards—La Petite Reine was like a radiant point in a dark and murky sky. Through the long night of civil war, she beamed and trembled in the air, a living light.

Valerian, count de St. Pol, came to Windsor Castle on the part of Charles, and on pretence of jousting, held a private conference with Richard in the royal house.

No better agent on the part of France existed than St. Pol. He knew his ground. Some years before, flying from trouble in his own dominion, he had come to Windsor, and while living here, had won the heart of Maud de Courtney, the king's sister, then a youthful widow, and had taken her in the chapel of St. George to wife. This match had been resented by the barons, who objected to their princesses marrying peers of France. The French were enemies, only to be embraced in mail. Alliances like St. Pol's with Lady Maud meant peace, while all these sturdy chiefs were panting for a larger armament in Normandy and Maine. To

save St. Pol from insult and appease the public wrath, the bride and bridegroom had been sent away. On their arrival in Paris, Charles had received them into favour; seeing in the able count and in his English bride his future ministers of peace. Appointed chamberlain, St. Pol had been kept about the king's person. When Charles became insane, he had moved from the Louvre to St. Pol's hotel on the Seine, and there the Little Queen had been mostly lodged. From time to time, St. Pol had crossed to Windsor for the festivals of St. George; and by the grace and courtesy of his manner, no less than by the wisdom of his counsel, he had made himself a favourite with his English host.

Thus, when Anne, daughter of the Cæsars, passed away, St. Pol had crossed the straits with offers on the part of Charles.

Distracted by their civil broils, some of the French councillors were anxious to treat for peace. Would England, asked St. Pol, consent to treat? If Richard was prepared to sign a truce, Charles was prepared to give him his daughter, Madame Isabel, with the largest dowry ever lavished by king on a royal bride.

In confidence, Richard told St. Pol that for his

own part he was willing; that his uncles, Lancaster and York, might be persuaded to consent; but that his uncle Gloucester would oppose them, equally in the truce and in the match.

Gloucester, as Richard knew, had many reasons for his opposition to St. Pol. He was a fighting man and wanted war. He was a poor man—as he counted riches—and he wanted pay and plunder. He was out of favour in the council, and he wished to have a great command abroad. But more than all, he had a daughter whom he yearned to hail as queen. One of Lancaster's daughters was queen of Castile; another, queen of Portugal. Why should not Richard marry Lady Anne of Gloucester? True, she was young; but she was not so infantine as Madame Isabel. 'Too near in blood,' the king had answered him; 'Lady Anne is my cousin; nay, my cousin-german.'

'Madame Isabel is too young,' persisted Gloucester and the councillors who took his part.

'Well, time will cure her of the one defect,' returned the king; 'besides, her youth is an advantage; before she grows into a woman, she will have learned to be an English girl.'

Gloucester felt injured. Every one seemed to thwart him. He wished his son, Lord Humphrey,

to be made an earl. He wished his daughter, Lady Anne, to become a queen. On every side he met rebuke. Hot words escaped his lips, and Richard felt assured that in his temper he would go all lengths, lest truce should lead to peace, and peace should bring in Madame Isabel.

Bolingbroke was absent on his pilgrimage; so that his voice—so potent were he on the spot—would hardly weigh; but many of the ablest soldiers in the kingdom, men like Arundel and Warwick, were disposed to back up Gloucester's policy of war with vote and sword. A truce with France would be unpopular with many classes, throwing soldiers out of work, deranging the country markets, and suspending the transport trade. The city might object, and if the citizens were to join the war-party, Richard's crown might be at stake. Though fond of peace, the king was daunted by that turbulent duke.

St. Pol was near, his counsel ready:

'Sire, you must dissemble with the duke. Win him over; promise him anything. When the match is finished you can change your councillors. The king of France, being then your ally, will assist you, and your rebels will be prostrate at your feet.'

Quickening at the thought of galling and tricking his uncle, Richard replied to his French tempter:

'I will do so. I will dissemble and deceive them all.'

A match was secretly arranged at Windsor with St. Pol; but even when the terms were fixed, some obstacles still blocked the way. Madame Isabel had been betrothed to another prince, so that a papal dispensation was required. Now Paris and Windsor owned two rival popes. A brief from Clement had no force at Windsor, while a brief from Boniface had no force in Paris. Even were a dispensation to be got from both the pope and anti-pope, how was the royal duke, and those who acted with the royal duke, to be disarmed?

Luckily for the king, that family feud between his uncles was at fever heat. Gloucester had been compelled to yield Cole Harbour to his nephew, Bolingbroke. Lady Mary had left four sons, all of whom stood between Lord Humphrey of Gloucester and the Hereford titles and estates. Bolingbroke was kneeling at the Sepulchre; but his sons were growing up in strength; the eldest, Harry of Monmouth, promising to be a mighty chief of men. Lancaster frowned on his brother

Gloucester, and the younger duke repaid him scorn for scorn. Never again, said the lord of Pleshy, should he regard his brother Lancaster and his nephew Bolingbroke as friends — such friends as they had been to him before the days of Radcote bridge.

To widen this great breach between his uncles, and to turn their passions to his own account, Richard gave his ear to a curious suit.

Lancaster's second wife, Doña Constanza of Castile, had left no son. The duke desired to marry his concubine, Catharine de Roet, the mother of his younger boys, all of whom lived in his house and were owned by him as his sons. Nobody but the king could help him here. Duchess and countess of Plantagenet blood were certain to cry out against this act of penitence and justice, as insulting to their virtue and injurious to their rank. If Catharine de Roet became duchess of Lancaster, her place at court would be very high; higher, in fact, than that of any other lady, save a reigning queen.

No sooner was the duke's project opened than the war of words began. Duchess Elinor of Gloucester, a descendant of Lady Elizabeth Plantagenet, and Countess Mary of Arundel, a Mortimer

of the line of Clarence, led the way, by railing in all places at the 'concubine.' If Catharine de Roet were raised to ducal rank, and introduced at court, these ladies swore that they would quit the palace in disgust.

Delighted with this chaos in his family, the king supported Lancaster, saying he was right in marrying the mother of his sons. Lancaster, in his turn, became an advocate for the truce with France, and even for the match with Madame Isabel.

Some of the king's men—his cousin Edward, earl of Rutland; his Earl-marshal, Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, now won over secretly to his side; and his trusty chamberlain, William Le Scrope—went over privately to Paris, where they saw the king and queen of France, as well as Madame Isabel; and having formed a good opinion of the child, returned to Windsor Castle with their news.

Richard, waiting for them feverishly in his cabinet, was delighted when they, one and all, assured him that they had been no less than enchanted by his choice. They had found the princess, said the Earl-marshal, lodging at the Count de St. Pol's hotel on the Seine. She seemed sedate and clever for her age—a little over eight. Mow-

bray reported that, when dropping on his knee, and telling the little lady of his errand, saying to her: 'Madame, if God pleases, you shall be our queen and lady,' she had answered him at once, without a hint from any of the elder ones: 'Sir, if it please God and my lord and father that I be queen of England, I shall be happy, for I am told that the queen of England is a very great lady.'

Then, as these ambassadors told the king, the princess gave her hand to Mowbray, raised him from the floor, and led him with her tiny finger towards the queen, her mother, to whom she presented him in state.

The coming mistress of Windsor seemed to understand her craft.

CHAPTER V.

AT WINDSOR.

1396–7.

YET much had to be done before a truce was signed—a road laid open for the child to enter on her part as Little Queen. Outside the royal house no one sincerely tried to gain a truce.

A ghostly agent was employed by Charles.

One day a pilgrim from the Holy Sepulchre, bearing the name of Robert the Hermit, came from Paris to Windsor Castle; coming, as he told the councillors and captains, in the cause of peace on earth and of goodwill to men. He brought credentials from the king of France, who prayed the king, his English brother, to receive the holy hermit, and to lend him a believing ear. This hermit found a welcome from the king, who lodged him on the royal hill, and helped him by his countenance in the cause of peace.

On sailing from the coast of Palestine, this hermit said, his vessel had been caught in a great storm, and driven along the flood three days and nights with no apparent slackening of the gale. All souls on board had given themselves up for lost. The hermit, for his own part, had devoted all his strength to prayer, until at length his supplications had been heard on high. The storm abating, he had dared to raise his eyes, when he beheld a figure in the clouds—a figure shining and translucent as a crystal—which, with an uplifted hand, addressed him in these words:

'Robert, thou shalt escape this danger—thou, and thy companions for thy sake. Thy prayers are heard. Hie thee to France. Seek out the king, and tell him all that thou hast seen. Speak boldly. Tell him that the war has raged too long. He and his English adversary must sign a truce. When thou findest that conferences are being held, step into the council-chamber, face the great peers, and let them know my will. Woe unto such as will not hear thee! They shall suffer for their blindness—even in the present life!'

Then, said the holy man, that figure, shining and translucent as a crystal, had dissolved into the light. A moment later, all had changed. A

gentle breeze, which now sprang up, had wafted him to Genoa, from which he had journeyed to Avignon, where the papal penitentiary, after hearing his confession, had enjoined him to keep silence as to his commission till he got to Paris, and had seen the king and council. On his coming to that capital, Charles had given him credence as a man of truth; but in his majesty's uncles he had found the councillors whom the spirit had described as hard of faith. So he had come to Windsor Castle, with a license to disclose and to declare the will of Heaven. That will was peace.

Lancaster affected to believe this hermit, whom the king and court were treating in his Windsor lodgings with the reverence due, not only to a pilgrim, but a living saint. Gloucester, on the other side, denounced him as an impostor; raving against the notion of issues like those of peace and war being left to hang on the trickeries of anchorets and penitentiaries. The earl of Arundel agreed with Gloucester; and the family feud, which had been mainly feminine, spread among the peers and knights.

In spite of Duchess Elinor of Gloucester, and Countess Mary of Arundel, Lancaster gave his

hand—with Richard's full consent—to Catharine de Roet; an act of justice to the lady and her offspring, by which Chaucer became brother-in-law by marriage to a royal duchess.

Catharine de Roet was of lower rank than Lancaster's other wives. Blanche of Lancaster had brought to her husband a duchy, and to her son by him a claim to the regal succession; Constanza of Castile had given him rights in Spain which made his daughters by her queens. Catharine de Roet had no crown to bring her partner; but the tutor of his elder, and the mother of his younger children, was a bright and clever woman, and of dignity enough to hold her own at court, though Duchess Elinor of Gloucester, and Countess Mary of Arundel, threatened to 'burst of grief.'

Dissembling and deceiving on all sides, the king supported Duchess Catharine, and condoled with Duchess Elinor. His uncle, Lancaster, was such a headstrong man! To make his uncle Gloucester some amends for all the favours showered on Lancaster, he promised—privately—to give him fifty thousand nobles, and to make his son, Lord Humphrey, earl of Rochester. Unlike Hereford, Rochester was a new title; but

an earldom was an earldom; and Gloucester's son, in virtue of that title, would obtain a seat among the peers. Bitten by the bait, Gloucester withdrew his protest, and the French being satisfied with their terms, a truce was signed. Then came the peace—the contract—and the bridal rites.

Madame Isabel, exchanged at Abbeville, married at Calais, and escorted to London, was unrobed and put to school in Windsor Castle, which was now made over to La Petite Reine to be her future nursery, school, and home.

With now and then a trip to Eltham, Havering, and Westminster, the Little Queen was to spend the whole fore part of her English reign on the Castle hill.

His majesty, a young man, as he thought, with nearly all his years in front of him, proposed to train her in his own ways, under his own eyes, and mainly with his own hands, so that she might grow up into a woman after his own heart. Only nine years old, she was an infant, plastic to his touch, ready to fall into such mould as he desired for her. In some things he was fit to give her lessons. He could teach her English; he could show her courtly

ways ; he could instruct her in the choice of books ; and he could manage her guitar. Truth, honesty, and courage, were not things within his gift ; but in many of the more womanish arts he was an adept. Though a little foppish for the son of such a prince as Edward of Poictiers, his manners were extremely sweet.

Courtney, constable of Windsor, was entrusted with the young queen's personal safety—a commission of the highest nature, as events were quick to show.

A stout old bachelor, uncle of Madame St. Pol, and a connexion of the king, Courtney, was one of the heroes of the Spanish war. A son of Hugh de Courtney, earl of Devon, he had entered life on the highest level. Choosing a career of arms, he had served under the Black Prince, and won his knighthood on the field. Successively he had held the offices of standard-bearer, governor of Calais, and privy councillor. On the fall of Burley, in whose school he had been trained, he had been selected, as a man of trust, to fill the post of constable, and to take command of the Norman keep. Brave, loyal, prudent, he had kept his feet where other men had been falling fast, and in his ripe experience

he was now entrusted with the safety of La Petite Reine.

Madame de Coucy, a lady who had come with Isabel from Paris, was continued in her post—already given to her by Charles—as governess to the queen. Daughter of Jean, duke de Lorraine, and wife of Ingelram de Coucy, Madame de Coucy was connected with the reigning families of both France and England. Coucy, her husband, was abroad, fighting by the side of Bolingbroke against the Sultan Bajazet. A great disaster to the Christian camp, in which Coucy held a chief command, had recently occurred near Nicopolis, on the Danube. Bolingbroke, by his skill and daring, had preserved a remnant of his army; but Ingelram de Coucy had been captured, and his forces utterly destroyed. Hundreds of palaces and châteaux were in mourning for that day; and Madame de Coucy, when she came to Windsor Castle, hardly knew whether her husband was alive or dead.

A servant of a lowlier grade came over with the Little Queen to Windsor, in the person of a girl called Simonette. This maiden was a Saracen, one of those unfortunate captives of crusading wars by which the courts of kings and sultans

were supplied with slaves. Simonette, the Saracen maid, was bright, accomplished, docile; spoke the language of her mistress like a native; and, next to Madame de Coucy, the child loved her more than any one else on earth.

In these safe hands the child was left, while Richard rode out east and west with the bewildering haste then common to all royal personages. Too young as yet to spend her days on horseback, Isabel rested on the Castle hill, among her flowers, her teachers, and her damozels; now toying with her books and beads, now listening to the canons in St. George's choir, and now again sporting in the forest glades. In his more idle hours, the king rode down to Windsor for a word and kiss. Isabel liked to see him come, and grieved to see him part. He brought to her a sense of freedom and relief. His face and bearing never frightened her, like those of the grim knights in glaive and mail, who, in the tilt-yard under her chamber window, thrust each other from their saddles, and were sometimes borne out gashed and stunned. Richard was a minstrel rather than a knight—a minstrel who sang to her, and made verses to her, calling her his little sister and his little spouse. To do a

weak and bad man justice, he was neither harsh nor hasty with his Little Queen.

But with his uncle Gloucester and his cousin Humphrey he carried out St. Pol's advice. As soon as Isabel was lodged at Windsor Castle, he forgot his promise to Gloucester of the fifty thousand nobles, and to Humphrey of the coronet of Rochester. Not a farthing of the money, not a twinkle of the coronet, ever gladdened his uncle's sight. But, on the other hand, more favour fell on Lancaster. Duchess Catharine's children—called the Beauforts, from their birthplace, Château de Beaufort, near the Loire, in France—were purged in blood, and put in order of succession to the throne. A papal bull confirmed this royal act. John de Beaufort, her eldest son, became earl of Somerset, and a personal attendant on the king. Henry de Beaufort, her second son, already dean of Sarum, was promoted to the deanery of Wells, and chosen chancellor of Oxford—steps on his way towards a bishop's mitre and a cardinal's hat. Thomas de Beaufort, her youngest son, was still unripe for public honours; but his order in the succession being fixed, his peerage only waited for advancing time.

La Petite Reine grew fond of Catharine. She

was gentler with the child than the Plantagenet ladies, who regarded Richard as a fool if not a traitor. Duchess Elinor was sore about the broken promise to her son, Lord Humphrey, and the insult to her daughter, Lady Anne. While Windsor and the Savoy drew nearer to each other, the distance from Windsor to Pleshy seemed to grow farther and farther day by day.

Chaucer and his family shared in the rising fortunes of the Beaufort princes. Chaucer received a pension, and his son was made chief butler; so that the poet's son had to give out, from the king's cellar, the poet's dole of wine.

In the midst of Richard's dissemblings and deceptions, an event occurred. Bolingbroke came home. Like other cowards, Richard had a mortal fear of fighting men, and the prince, who had just arrived at Cole Harbour from his pilgrimage, was a fighting man of the highest rank. By showing him favour, Richard gained two ends—he strengthened his own footing in the capital, and he inflamed his uncle Gloucester into acts of enmity towards the popular prince. Since his wife's demise, Bolingbroke had neither seen his sons nor set his foot on English ground. But he was young in years; and Lancaster was urging him to

strengthen and increase the line by taking a royal princess for his second wife. Richard was ready to assist. Lancaster and Bolingbroke were invited to Windsor Castle, where Richard signed a commission for his cousin Edward, his earl-marshal Mowbray, and his chamberlain Scrope, to negotiate a marriage for his cousin of Bolingbroke with a princess of Navarre.

Gloucester, excited by these acts of favour towards a prince whom he regarded as a robber, parted in a storm of passion from the only man who might have stood between him and the king's uplifted hand.

CHAPTER VI.

DUCHESS PHILIPPOTE.

1397.

THAT hand was raised, and with a deadly purpose in the steel.

The sight of Duchess Philippote glooming at Windsor in her widow's weeds infused a daily bitterness into Richard's heart. The gall was sharpened by remorse; for he was well aware that his own base compliance was the origin of all her wrongs.

Duchess Philippote was at Windsor in attendance on the Little Queen. She knew the Castle, in and out. Her mother, Princess Isabella, had lived here much, and married her husband in St. George's chapel. At the age of thirty—after losing the treasure of her love, the dignity of her station as a wife—Philippote had returned to Windsor Castle with a broken heart.

The life of Duchess Philippote had been a drama from her cradle upwards, and the scenery of that drama had been laid on the Castle hill.

Her mother, Princess Isabella, sister of the Black Prince, after being proposed for Don Pedro of Castile, Count Louis of Flanders, Kaiser Karl of Germany, and other potentates, had made a love-match with a young and gallant knight whom she had first seen and crowned in the Windsor tilting-yard. In one of the Windsor festivals, Ingelram de Coucy, a rider of twenty-four, had carried off the prize, and with that prize, which he received from Isabella's hands, he had carried off the young lady's heart. Bright in wit but poor in purse, Coucy had no other pretensions to the princess—daughter of the great Edward—than a shrewd tongue, a handsome person, and a flashing sword. In rank, the man was nobody. According to his quaint device:

> Neither king, duke, prince, nor baron am I;
> I am the Sire de Coucy.

Coucy le Château, then a picturesque fortress, now a picturesque ruin, stood on the spit and scarp of a range of hills, looking over a deep

valley in the Isle de France, near the frontiers of Picardy. In the general form of outer ward, inner ward, and circular keep, that château in Picardy bore some resemblance to the buildings on the Castle hill.

Isabella had conceived a liking for the young French knight, so different to her royal and imperial suitors. Coucy was a hostage in her father's camp, being one of several bondsmen for the king of France; who had been suffered to go home on parole, in the hope of raising money. Edward, gracious in so many things, had been most of all gracious with his daughters. He had never forced them into matches of policy; and when he found that Isabella preferred the Sieur de Coucy to all her other suitors, he had given his blessing to their union; making up for what he felt to be want of splendour in the match by the magnificence of their marriage-rites. No less than a hundred pounds had been paid for the Windsor minstrels on that noisy day.

Two daughters, Lady Marie and Lady Philippote, were born; Marie, the French heiress, Philippote, the English heiress. Coucy had been created earl of Bedford; and the new earl and countess, happy in their love-match, now at

Windsor, now at Château le Coucy, had spent their pleasant days together, until war had broken out between the French and English crowns. Then had come a day of trial and of parting. Coucy, a Frenchman, had to side with his native land. Isabella, unable to follow him to the camp, or even to remain at Château le Coucy, had returned to England. Each had kept a child; Marie staying in France with her father, Philippote coming back to England with her mother. Thus, the once happy family had been broken up by higher duties than those of love. Separated in space, the English princess and her French husband had never been separated in heart. Yet, loyal to their several countries, husband and wife had parted at Château le Coucy never to meet again on earth.

After Princess Isabella's death, the Sieur de Coucy had taken for his second wife a daughter of the duke of Lorraine, that Madame de Coucy who was now at Windsor with the Little Queen.

What could be done for Lady Philippote by her English kinsmen had been done. Her mother's property had been secured to her. The manors which Coucy had held in England, and forfeited by his desertion, had been restored to her. Almost

in her cradle, a husband had been found for her in the young and wealthy Vere. For her sake mainly, Vere had been advanced in rank and power, first to a marquisate, afterwards to a dukedom, so that Philippote might be a duchess, like her cousins of the royal blood. In spite of Vere's divorce from her—and afterwards in spite of his attainder—she had been allowed to keep her rank as countess of Oxford and as duchess of Ireland. When the Little Queen came from Paris to Windsor, under charge of Madame de Coucy, her step-mother, Philippote had been placed by Richard near her person, as his next of kin.

In spite of her great injuries, Philippote still treasured in her heart a proud, unsleeping love for Vere. To her, in spite of all his vices, he was still the lover of her childhood and the husband of her youth. All that was vile in him lay buried and forgotten in a foreign grave. Neglected and divorced—supplanted and replaced—she held on loyally to her plighted faith and waived aside all further suits of love. The highest nobles in the land were at her feet; for she was beautiful and rich, and stood in close connexion with the crown. But Duchess Philippote had neither eyes nor ears for any other man than Vere.

Conscious of his own want of faith, Richard turned the edge of his remorse by hatred of the men who had widowed his cousin and destroyed his friend.

True, Vere had cast her out, and put a stranger in her room. But while he lived, there might be hope of his repentance and return. Vere, dead at Louvain, left Philippote a wreck for life.

How could he crush the men who had laid waste her hearth? Of these men, there were five; three of them offenders in the first degree; two of them offenders in the second degree; but all of them obnoxious to the king, as enemies of his former friend. Gloucester, Arundel, and Warwick, were the greater criminals; the first to be entrapped, arrested, and cut down. Mowbray and Bolingbroke were to follow—but not yet.

The lords, suspecting his designs, were talking of a counterplot; by means of which they were to seize on Windsor Castle, separate the king and queen, depose the sovereign as an idiot, and set up Mortimer as a puppet king.

St. Pol came over on a visit to the queen; and being closeted with the king at Windsor, heard from Richard's lips reports of what was going on.

The king's nephew and heir, Roger de Mortimer, had been asked by Gloucester to Pleshy, where the duke had told him confidentially that Arundel and Warwick were engaged, with other lords, in a conspiracy to upset the throne. Their purpose was to march on Windsor Castle, seize the king and queen, separate them from each other, and confine them in two fortresses far apart. That French marriage, they declared, was out of nature; they would take such measures that a son should not be born. Roger de Mortimer was told that he should have his own, as heir presumptive to the crown. In fact, the conspirators meant to use his name, unfurl his flag, and conquer in his cause. Enough for them, the duke pretended, that they put down the king, renewed the war, and led their followers into France.

Mortimer, the king went on, was smitten dumb by these disclosures. To hear such things was no less dangerous than to speak them. Seize the king and queen! Usurp the throne! Roger de Mortimer loved the king, who was his friend as well as cousin. Not for his life would Mortimer raise his hand against the king. But Gloucester was his uncle, and the young man, timid and

tender, had evaded the public duty which might have brought that uncle to the block.

But as the prince sat dumb, Gloucester had begun to see his error. Greedy of pelf and power, he had not dreamt that any man could refuse a crown. But he had said too much. Should Mortimer unmask him to the king, as he was bound by faith and oath to do, the duke and all his friends were lost. In his despair, Gloucester had begged the prince to keep his secret. Mortimer, confused by his affection for the king, his cousin, and his pity for the duke, his uncle, promised to be silent; a disloyal, and indeed a fatal promise, which converted him into a partner in the plot, without the excuse of believing that his cousin Richard was unfit to reign.

Riding from Pleshy, Mortimer had come to court, and asked the royal license to rejoin his Irish camp. The king, aware from his own spies of what was going on at Pleshy, had given his feeble cousin and heir presumptive his leave to run away.

Such was, in substance, the report of Richard to his visitor, St. Pol, on the condition of his family and his kingdom.

'They are going too far, sire,' said the French

count. 'If you allow them to proceed they will undo you. Take measures to be first with them. Better have them afraid of you, than that you should be afraid of them.'

After the Count de St. Pol left Windsor for Paris, Richard drew aside his half-brother, John, earl of Huntingdon, third son of the Fair Countess, and told him what St. Pol had said about the duke and his discontented friends. John, the godson —at least the godson—of the Black Prince, was a rough and reckless soldier, caring for nothing but a fight. He replied at once:

'St. Pol has told the truth, sire. I would counsel you to act on his advice.'

These counsels suited Richard, for they promised him revenge. Working in the dark, the king next called his two uncles, Lancaster and York, into his council:

'My good uncles, for the love of God advise me what to do. I am informed that your brother, the duke of Gloucester, the earl of Arundel, and other lords, intend to seize me, and lodge me in one of their castles; to break my truce with the king of France, and to separate me from the queen, who is a child. You know what I have borne from the duke of Gloucester, making light of his

many threats against me. In the end, good uncles, those threats may prove my ruin.'

The dukes replied to him, as they had always done, in deprecation of his haste and passion:

'Have patience, sire. Avoid all hurried measures. Our brother Gloucester has undoubtedly the worst temper of any man in England; but he is only one; he can neither break your truce, nor lodge you in a castle, nor separate you from the queen. Confide in us, and you will find that things will all go well.'

This sage advice was thrown away; the king having ends in view of which these royal dukes knew nothing. He had Duchess Philippote to avenge, and others, who were hardly less importunate than the duchess, to avenge.

Vere was but one in his array of ghostly memories. Who, among his old and faithful councillors, were left alive? Rope, axe, and banishment, had mown them down. Bramber and Tresilian had been hung at Tyburn. Burley had fallen to the earth on Tower hill. Pole had pined to death in Paris; while Vere, the youngest and most favoured of his councillors, had perished in a wretched lodging at Louvain. Queen Anne, their friend, was also gone; that sister of

Augustus, who, loving Burley as a child loves her father, had implored the rugged Gloucester, the sarcastic Arundel, to spare the old man's life; and who had been repulsed in her appeal for mercy like a beggar's brat. All, all were gone; all save Duchess Philippote and himself!

On the other side, the murderers of his friends and councillors were all alive,—hale, active, prosperous men.

Distrust and anger had been slowly and securely sown between the five offending lords. Bolingbroke's marriage had divided him from his uncle Gloucester. Arundel suspected Warwick of deserting the common cause, and seeking favour at the court. Warwick, in his turn, suspected Arundel. Mowbray, won by royal courtesies, had secretly sold his talents and his services to the king—intending to betray his comrades to the block.

When Bolingbroke first came in from his pilgrimage, Arundel, fretting at the policy pursued at court, invited the four lords who had acted with him in the league against Vere and Burley, to renew their pact. These lords agreed to meet at Arundel castle and consult together. Mowbray,

who had married Arundel's daughter, was the first to move. Bolingbroke, having as yet no reason to suspect his comrade of Radcote bridge, rode after him. When Gloucester reached Arundel castle, all his friends were there save Warwick, who had not arrived. At once the four lords, Gloucester, Bolingbroke, Arundel, and Mowbray, swore an oath to be 'true to the realm and to each other,'—as they had been in the days of Radcote bridge. Warwick soon came in; on which the oath, already sworn by the others, was put to him. He seemed to hang back slightly, and suspicious eyes were bent on him. After a moment's thought, he swore as all the rest had sworn; but each of these five lords was conscious of a changed relation towards the common cause and towards each other. Gloucester was at feud with Bolingbroke about the lady he had wished to make a nun. Mowbray, false to all sides, affected to consider Warwick as a spy. Warwick and Arundel were barely on speaking terms.

At parting, they agreed to meet again at Waltham Cross. That second conference was their last. The league broke up in wrath and

scorn; each peer retiring to his home released from all his oaths and bonds. Mowbray's false dealings had produced this wreck; and now, the ground being cleared, Mowbray advised the king to strike.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WINDSOR PLOT.

1397.

On the vigil of St. Swithin's day, the king came tearing up the Castle hill. His mood was dark, his spirit flushed; for he had entered on a wild and perilous course, each step of which seduced him into blacker and more dangerous crimes. In passing to his private cabinet, he whispered to his brother Huntingdon:

'The duke of Gloucester must be slain.'

Huntingdon, the confidant of his purpose, was a brutal soldier, with a double murder on his soul. At Shrewsbury he had killed with his own hand a Carmelite friar; at Beverley he had stabbed a nobleman to the heart. On each occasion Richard had pardoned him for their mother's sake—if not for their father's sake. But on the second deed of blood, he had insisted that the murderer should

take up his Cross, and go on pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre. Instead of wending in a penitent's garb to Palestine, Huntingdon had joined the Free-lances under Della Scala in the Milanese, where he had proved himself one of the wildest devils of that infamous band. Taken prisoner by the Paduans, he had been ransomed by the king, his brother, who had brought him home, invested him with large estates, and raised him to the dignity of an earl. Owing his life, his liberty, and his fortune, to the king, this turbulent son of the Fair Countess was the very man to take in Richard's hint:

'The duke of Gloucester must be slain.'

Bolingbroke was absent from these Windsor councils. But the lines of Lancaster and York were present in the royal house; present in the persons of John, earl of Somerset, and Edward, earl of Rutland; each, like the earl-marshal Mowbray, an aspirant for the post of favourite left vacant by the death of Vere. Side by side with these princes of the blood, sat the two peers of the half-blood, John, earl of Huntingdon, and Thomas, earl of Kent. These lords were closely knit by marriage; Somerset's sister being Huntingdon's wife, while Huntingdon's niece was Somerset's

wife. Outside this innermost circle of the reigning house, stood Thomas Despenser and William le Scrope. Despenser had attainders to reverse; Scrope had a coronet to win.

But none of these councillors was the true dictator of the Windsor plot. That diabolical credit fell to Mowbray, the earl-marshal, tenant of the great outwork standing at the foot of the Norman keep.

Mowbray—a man whose quality and action were alike misunderstood by Shakespeare—was the tenth in descent from that Nigel de Albini, who obtained the lands forfeited by Robert de Mowbray of Northumbria, first prisoner in the Norman keep. These aliens had assumed the name of Mowbray. Living their rough and brawling lives, fighting in this affair and that, seven generations had passed away, and were as much forgotten as the prisoner in the keep. The eighth lord married Lady Joan, a daughter of Henry earl of Lancaster; the ninth lord, Lady Elizabeth, whose mother, Lady Margaret Plantagenet, was in her own right duchess of Norfolk. John, the tenth lord, was created earl of Nottingham; and on his death, Thomas, his younger brother, was created earl, invested with the office of marshal,

made a Knight of the Garter, and assigned a residence at Windsor Castle, in the outwork afterwards to be called from him the Devil's tower.

At first, he had acted with the Lancasters. Blanche of Lancaster was his relative. The duke was kind to him; and Bolingbroke treated him like an elder brother. Mowbray and Bolingbroke had been afield at Radcote bridge, and Bolingbroke, then a lad of twenty, had acted with Mowbray in impeaching Pole and Vere.

Since Bolingbroke laid up his sword at Windsor to assume his Cross, Richard had been seducing Mowbray to his side, hoping to find in him an able and willing instrument for the destruction of his foes. Mowbray was ready to be won. His days were spent in studying every warp and shadow of the royal mind, in order to be ready with the welcome word, and still more welcome deed, that led to power. Mowbray was now the king's man, hoping with time and patience to become his master. He intended to assume the function of a greater and a luckier Vere. Vere had been made a duke; might he not also live to wear the cap and sword? An ancestress of his had worn the coronet of Norfolk; and he meant, at any cost, to wear that coronet himself.

One week of treachery and violence, in which he had not scrupled to employ the most eminent and sacred persons as his tools, had brought him one great failure and two great successes. When he advised the king to strike, messengers had been sent to Gloucester, Arundel, and Warwick, asking them up to Westminster, where the king desired to see them. Gloucester had declined to come; not, as he said, because he feared to meet the king, his nephew, but because he mistrusted and disliked the Londoners, who 'prate so much and do so little.' If the king would name some other place, he had pledged his word to come. Nothing that Mowbray urged could change this purpose of the royal duke. Gloucester had refused his snares. This case was Mowbray's failure—for a time.

Arundel, safe in his castle on the Sussex downs, had tried to put the king and his ministers off with words. When pressed to come to Westminster, he also had refused. The archbishop of Canterbury had been next employed. Thomas, formerly of Ely, afterwards of York, and now of Canterbury, had every wish to please the court, yet feared to take a part in what might prove to be an attempt against his brother's liberty and life. When he was asked to lure his brother up to

Westminster, he had declined, repeating that his brother would not come, except on guarantees.

'Give him your own,' said Mowbray.

The archbishop had smiled.

'What better pledge than an archbishop's word can he require?' asked Mowbray.

The archbishop had only smiled.

Arundel would listen to no guarantee save the king's; not his mere word, reported through another, but his solemn oath, sworn on the gospels. Mowbray had induced the king to swear that oath. Then the archbishop had pledged his word, as priest and bishop, acting in the power of holy Church, that if his brother Arundel came up to Lambeth palace, he should be at liberty to return in peace.

Warwick, suspecting nothing, had come to town. As soon as he arrived, Richard, calling in his venerable chancellor, Edward, bishop of Exeter, had told him that he willed to come next day and dine with him at Exeter house, where he should be glad to meet his friend the earl of Warwick. Exeter house, more famous afterwards as Essex house, stood in the Strand near Temple Bar. The gardens skirted the river-side, to which a stair descended, for the use of passengers by boat. Flattered by the king's courtesy, the chancellor

had invited Warwick to his house, where the old warrior spent a pleasant evening with the king. On leaving for his barge, Warwick had been surrounded, hustled into a boat, and swept along the river to the Tower.

Mowbray had so arranged his friend's arrest, that no one in London, save his captors, knew that night that Warwick had been trapped.

Trusting to the king's oath and the archbishop's pledge, Arundel had left his stronghold on the Sussex downs and come to Lambeth. Spending one night under his brother's roof, he and the primate had crossed next day from Lambeth stair to Westminster palace, where, on reaching the anteroom, they had been informed that Arundel must go into the cabinet and the primate wait outside. The primate had waited long. Noon came; night came; but Arundel never came. Insulted by the pages and chamberlains, the archbishop had left the palace, returning to Lambeth stair, uncertain of his brother's fate.

On entering the king's cabinet, Arundel's eyes had fallen on Mowbray, his son-in-law, who was standing near the king. As the door closed behind him, Richard had risen and left the room, hissing as he went out to Mowbray:

'Take him away! take him away!'

Opening an inner door, Mowbray had pressed his father-in-law into a private closet, from which there was no outlet save that door. Thrusting him in, Mowbray had turned the key. Alone—left with no fire, no food, no water, and no servant—Arundel had remained all day. At midnight, some of the royal servants had conducted him to a barge at Westminster stair, and hurried him to the Tower.

These were Mowbray's great successes—for a time.

The failure balanced the success; in Richard's eyes far more than balanced the success. His thoughts were black with murder. Baffled in his hope of taking his uncle in the snare, his cry was now for blood:

'The duke of Gloucester must be slain.'

Mowbray, like Huntingdon, was ready for the crime; but how were they to get the royal duke into their power?

Gloucester was still at large; alert, alarmed, but safe in his great hold at Pleshy. How could he be taken from that fortress? Pleshy, a place some thirty miles from Aldgate, lying in the woods between Dunmow and Chelmsford, was

strong enough to stand a siege. No force could march towards such a place in secret. Fraud must be employed.

In the secresy of the king's cabinet at Windsor, under Mowbray's resolute eye and guiding hand, a scheme was framed for carrying out the royal hint that 'Gloucester must be slain.' Richard was to assist; not only with his counsel, but with his person; for without his presence on the spot, the duke, his uncle, could not be entrapped. Mowbray, expecting great rewards, reserved to his own share the darkest part of the intended crime.

The first thing was to mask the plot and turn suspicion from the king. Already Warwick's tenants were astir. When news of Arundel's arrest got out, troubles might be expected in the Sussex downs. Gloucester was unpopular; but still, he was a royal duke, a son of the great Edward; not a dog who might be done to death and no man ask the reason why. A charge must be invented and proclaimed against him. What? Were Gloucester taken openly as an enemy to the king, men would expect him to be fairly tried and mercifully judged. A safer plan was to denounce him as a public enemy; an extortioner and oppressor, who ground the faces of poor men. All dukes lay open

to such charges. They were used to taking what they wanted with a strong and lawless hand; so that the tale of Gloucester's sins would fall on credulous ears.

Sauce for the duke would serve as sauce for the two lords. Let Gloucester, Arundel, and Warwick, hinted Mowbray, be denounced in every shire, at every market cross, as tyrants and oppressors, and the king might work his will on them, and no man lift either voice or staff in their defence.

This line being taken, orders were drawn up that night, and dated Windsor, July 15th, 1397, directing the sheriff of every county in England to proclaim the duke of Gloucester, and the earls of Arundel and Warwick, tyrants and extortioners, and to announce, as a great act of public justice, that in spite of their nearness to the king in blood and station, the council had ordered their arrest, not as traitors to his majesty, but as enemies of the yeoman and the citizen. These orders, so expressed, were to be sent into the shires, with an instruction to the sheriffs to keep them back until the council's pleasure should be further known. In truth, they were to be reserved until the plot for entrapping Gloucester had been carried out.

Next came the method of arrest. No one save the king could enter Pleshy by surprise. A royal visit, on pretence of hunting, might be paid by Richard to his uncle. Hunting was then a summer sport; the Little Queen had seen no sport except in Windsor Park. Suppose they carried her from Windsor to Eltham, with her court of damozels and abigails? Where she was present, no one would suspect deceit and violence. Her innocence might be the cover of their guile. Leaving the Little Queen at Eltham, they might cross the river and divide their forces. Mowbray, wheeling the king's guard to his left, might take up ground near Stratford bridge; while Richard and his dogs, followed by Huntingdon, Kent, and Rutland, pricked to Havering, where they might dine and sleep. At dawn, the king and his party were to start for Pleshy, pushing rapidly through the woods and waters, and arriving at the castle gates before the duke and duchess were astir. When they were near those gates, close yet unseen, a rider was to spring in front of them, but only just in time to cry 'The king! The king!' as they dashed in—dogs, horses, buglemen, and all. Guard, seneschal, duke and duchess, were to be surprised. No time was to be allowed the duke

for thought. Reining up in the court-yard, his majesty was to play with his dogs, and chat with the ladies, but to plead his haste of business for returning with the duke to town. He was to tell his uncle that the London citizens were giving him trouble, and that he wanted the advice of aged and experienced men. Lancaster and York, he was to say, were to meet in council that day, and he desired his uncle Gloucester, as a man who knew the citizens, to be with them. Taken by surprise, flattered by the king's wish, Gloucester might quit his fortress. Once they had regained the road, the young men were to race, Richard following hard, so that the duke might become hot and out of breath. When they arrived near Stratford bridge, Richard was to prick on rapidly, leaving the duke behind; while Mowbray, springing from his ambush in the fields, was to close about his victim, stifle his cries for help, and hurry him to the waterside.

What next and last? *How* was the duke of Gloucester to be slain? Nevill, constable of the Tower, was trusty, and in ordinary matters would obey his orders; but the murder of a royal duke was not an ordinary thing. Gloucester must be done to death elsewhere.

What place for such a deed so good as Calais? Calais was a royal port and fortress; subject only to the king and his lieutenant. Mowbray was that king's lieutenant. Captain of the fortress, Mowbray could enter in by either day or night, and once within the walls he had authority of life and death. At Calais he had troops of followers, men of blood and rapine, who would stay at nothing. Calais was the place in which the duke of Gloucester should be slain.

A vessel was to lie in readiness. Mowbray engaged to put his victim on that vessel, to convey him down the Thames, and never leave him out of sight until the deed was done. At Calais little preparation was required. Mowbray knew the spot—the men—for such a deed; an inn called Prince's Inn, ruffians by the names of Hall and Colfox. At a nod these men would seize the duke, throw him on the floor, heap beds on him, and hold him down till he was dead.

The Windsor plot was ready for the day and hour.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOLINGBROKE.

1397.

THAT Windsor plot was carried through, as settled under Mowbray's hand in the royal cabinet; but the earl-marshal, in his haste, forgot one factor in his game. He overlooked what Bolingbroke might say and do. Bolingbroke had been so long away!

At thirty-one the master of Cole Harbour was a tall and handsome fellow, with a blue and laughing eye, made brighter by the bronze of his manly cheek. Since the affair at Radcote bridge, where Vere had fled before him, he had served in many camps—in Barbary against the Moors, in Pomerania against the Letts, in the Danubian states against the Turks. On horse and foot, by sea and land, he had everywhere fought with valour and renown. But he had not confined his thoughts to

war. Cross in hand, he had knelt beside the Holy Sepulchre, visited the convent of Mount Sinai, and prayed before the altar of St. George. Within the year he had led a Venetian fleet into the Danube, and had fought against the magnificent Bajazet. In the great battle of Nicopolis, where his great-uncle, the Sire de Coucy, had been taken prisoner, he had borne the shock of Moslem lances, yet had saved a remnant of his force, by skilfully withdrawing to his boats. From Cairo to Venice, from Dantzic to Toledo, he had gleaned the harvest of his fame. On coming back to London, crowned with the halo of a fearless knight and pious pilgrim, he had been received with rapture. Soldier of St. George, he was the only person of his family who had kissed the stone of redemption, and lit a taper at the tomb of Christ.

The king seemed friendly to him, but the love was only show. Each knew the other well. Once in their boyish days, Henry of Bolingbroke had drawn his sword on Richard of Bordeaux. When Richard screamed for help, Henry had turned from him in scorn with the contemptuous sneer, 'Son of a priest, and not a king!' Richard had never lost the memory of that boyish taunt, but he could nurse his injuries for many years, and

keep the feeling of his fret and sting alive. His time to square accounts with Bolingbroke was not yet come. While waiting for his time, he had no objection to cheat and lie.

Richard was fond of making oaths. One day, in his deceptive mood, he swore by St. Edward —his most binding oath—that he retained no feeling of offence against his cousin Bolingbroke.

Deceived at Pleshy, Gloucester was taken at Stratford bridge, and murdered at Calais under Mowbray's eyes. The Windsor proclamation was dispersed through all the shires, and under the deception of that lying spell, Arundel and Warwick were condemned to death. Thomas, archbishop of Canterbury, was banished from the realm. Arundel was executed in Cheapside; Mowbray tying up his eyes, and Richard gloating on the sight. Warwick was spared, to linger out his days in a dungeon of the Irish sea. Duchess Elinor and her two daughters—Lady Anne and Lady Joan—were conducted from Pleshy to Windsor Castle. Humphrey, her son, was placed in ward.

The victors shared the spoil. Edward, earl of Rutland, was created duke of Albemarle and lord high constable. John, earl of Somerset, was created marquis of Dorset. By these creations,

Richard believed that he was linking the dukes of York and Lancaster in his crime. Next came the earls of Huntingdon and Kent, who were created duke of Exeter and duke of Surrey. Mowbray received his coronet as duke of Norfolk. Scrope became earl of Wiltshire, and Despencer earl of Gloucester. Vere's attainder being reversed, his uncle, Aubrey de Vere, obtained the dukedom of Ireland. Pole the younger was restored as earl of Suffolk. Nevill received the earldom of Westmoreland, Percy that of Northumberland. The clouds appeared to be raining coronets.

Huntingdon got the castle of Arundel with the manorial rights of Petworth. Mowbray's son, Thomas, was contracted to Huntingdon's niece, and appointed page to the Little Queen. Walden, dean of York, was made archbishop of Canterbury, —though the wronged and exiled primate was alive! England had now a schism in the Church, like that which separated Avignon from Rome.

These peerages forced the king, though much against his will, to raise his cousin Bolingbroke to ducal rank. That prince received the cap and sword, with the title of duke of Hereford, in virtue of the claims of his lost wife, the mother of his sons.

But Bolingbroke was not appeased. Unlike his father and his uncle, he rejected the Calais fiction of a death by suicide. He thought the duke, his uncle, had been murdered, and by Mowbray's hands. The cries going up at Windsor from his aunt, the widowed Elinor, and his cousins, the orphaned Anne and Joan, against the murderer, reached him in his palace on the Thames. Mowbray, as he now perceived, had sold his honour to the court, had played with oaths, had broken faith, had given his comrades up to death. Lancaster and York, grown old in years, and anxious for their sons—the new marquis of Dorset, the new duke of Albemarle—might check their tongues; but he, though taking what belonged to him of right, was not to be annulled by royal gifts. For him there was a great appeal; the widow and the orphans of his uncle were not crying to the heavens in vain.

Mowbray suspected him. When Bolingbroke came to Windsor for his cap and sword, a whisper buzzed about the Castle that an ugly deed was likely to be done that day. Lancaster and Bolingbroke were said to be in danger. No one knew by whom and in what fashion; but the rumour ran, that they were likely to be waylaid

and despatched. Suspicion fell on Mowbray and the Devil's tower. Two youngsters, Surrey and Salisbury, were said to be engaged. But to waylay Bolingbroke was no game for lads, and nothing came of those reports until an after-time.

His three offenders being swept away, Richard began to move against the second line; his sham minister, Mowbray, and his brilliant cousin, Bolingbroke. Mowbray had rid him of the duke and earls. Could he be used to rid him of the prince?

A look, a shrug, a nod, sufficed.

Mowbray began his effort by attempting to entangle Bolingbroke in a fresh intrigue. To clear the way, he affected to be losing ground. The Devil's tower was hardly safe. Surrey, a stripling young enough to be at school, was, he pretended, pushing to the front. Scrope and Despencer were abetting Surrey, in the hope of ruling in his name. Salisbury, another youngster, who had just succeeded to his title, backed them up. These school-boys, he asserted, were impatient of his counsels, and the king, he said, preferred their chatter to his sage advice. When he had cleared his ground so far, he turned to Bolingbroke, and tried to lure him into the expression of disloyal thought.

A meeting on the road from Windsor to Westminster enabled him to start his game. Riding on the road, Bolingbroke overtook the minister near Brentford. As they trotted on, they fell into discourse. Mowbray put forth his arts, but Bolingbroke kept his tongue in check. Mowbray seemed soldierlike and frank, discussing court affairs in a familiar tone. Bolingbroke noted every word, but ventured little in reply. Mowbray referred to that foul play at Windsor. He professed to know that Lancaster and Bolingbroke had been marked for slaughter. He pretended that on hearing of the plot, he had stept between the plotters and their victims, and been able to divert the blow. That scheme, he went on, was abandoned, but the prince still lay in peril of his life. Surrey and Salisbury, aided by Scrope and Despencer, were resolved on ruining every man who stood in their way at court. Lancaster and Bolingbroke were marked, and were the first to be undone.

'For what?' the prince inquired.

'For Radcote bridge,' his tempter answered. He was marked, he said, himself. Surrey intended to be Vere.

Bolingbroke expressed surprise, but nothing more. Undone! How, why, and where? The

king had pardoned them. They had his royal word and pledge.

Mowbray persisted that they were both in danger, and he hinted at the need for measures of defence. A party of resistance to those head-strong boys, he said, was formed within the court. Chiefs of this party were the dukes of Albemarle and Exeter. Worcester was with them. Surrey and his friends were bent on ruining six great lords, and sharing their estates and honours. Lancaster stood first, Bolingbroke second, on their list. Such were the facts. What then? Should they not look about, and see what could be done? 'In less than ten years,' said Mowbray, 'they will have our houses and estates.'

Having heard enough, Bolingbroke gave his palfrey rein. Pricking to town, he snatched his tables, and set their conversation down. Mischief was sure to spring from that wild talk, and Bolingbroke got ready to defend his truth.

One day, the intriguing minister, conscious so far of failure, being with the king alone, observed to him:

'My God! the whole of your enemies are neither dead nor out of your realm.'

The king turned pale, and, looking at his

creature, asked him: 'How do you know that?' Mowbray replied that he knew what he was saying, but would go no further, save to beg his majesty to hold a feast, and bid his uncle of Lancaster, and his cousin of Hereford, to attend that feast. The king agreed; having reasons of his own. A day was named, the incident prepared. The royal dukes and councillors were present. On rising from his table, Richard led his uncles, Lancaster and York, into his cabinet council-chamber. Mowbray followed them, and, kneeling at the king's feet, exclaimed in a loud voice:

'Dear and famous lord! I am of your kin, your liege and marshal. I have sworn, my hands in yours, that I would conceal nothing from you to your prejudice, on pain of being regarded as a traitor. That I shall never do, but stand acquitted of my duty before all the world.'

Richard, affecting great surprise, inquired of his kneeling servant:

'Earl-marshal, what do you intend by this? We mean to know your mind.'

Mowbray, affecting deep devotion to his majesty, returned:

'When I am bidden, as I have said, I keep

no secrets from you. Send for your cousin; I will then speak out.'

Bolingbroke entered the king's cabinet. On his entry, followed by Salisbury, Exeter, and other peers, Mowbray sprang to his feet, glanced at the prince, and spake:

'I charge you, Henry of Bolingbroke, duke of Hereford, with having thought and spoken against your lord the king, saying of him that he was unworthy to wear the crown, that he disturbed the realm, that with no cause he banished men whose valour would defend the soil.'

Bolingbroke, taken by surprise at such an insult, mused for a moment, but he asked no person in that presence for advice. Turning the matter in his mind, he settled on his course, and then, removing his ducal cap, he walked up to Mowbray, eyed him from head to foot, and answered calmly, knowing that death was in his words:

'Earl-marshal, I say thou art a false and wicked knight. This I will prove on thee, my body against thine. Here is my glove.'

Dropping his glove, by way of challenge, on the floor, Bolingbroke turned and left the room. Mowbray snatched up that glove, by way

of answer, and departed from the cabinet by a second door.

Lancaster and York sat by, confused by what had taken place. Exeter and Salisbury rallied round the king, who seemed to be overwhelmed by terror and surprise. He played his part so well that Lancaster and York were taken in. Then, rising from his chair, Richard passed into another room, of which he instantly shot the lock.

His joy at these events was great. Two only of his five offending lords were left, and these two enemies of Vere were flying at each other's throat. Burley and Vere were well avenged. But Richard had still one cup of bliss to drain—the sight of Mowbray, whom his ignorant courtiers called his favourite, writhing in the agonies of death. If he allowed this challenge to be taken up, the combat, by the laws of chivalry, must be fought till either the accuser or accused was slain. A little more dissembling, and a fourth of his offenders would be crushed.

When he had settled on his course, he called his uncles, Lancaster and York, into his closet, and requested their advice on this unhappy turn.

Lancaster replied for both himself and York :

'Sire, send for your constable, and we will tell you.'

Albemarle, now constable, came into the cabinet. The dukes then told his majesty to send the constable to both the parties, and obtain their pledges not to quit the realm without his royal license. Albemarle went out; saw, first the prince, then the earl-marshal; obtained their promise not to quit the kingdom, and returned to say what he had done.

Richard, in seeming heaviness of heart, broke up his court, and every man rode home to his own place. A strange thing happened. Richard's most intimate friends attended, not his 'favourite,' the earl-marshal, but the prince!

CHAPTER IX.

COURT OF CHIVALRY.

1397-8.

BOLINGBROKE appealed to Richard, in his quality of king and knight, for the assemblage of a Court of Chivalry, and the appointment of a day of battle. He desired the court to meet at Windsor, and to judge between himself and his opponent near the altar of St. George.

Windsor Castle was the natural home for such a court.

A Court of Chivalry was a court outside the law, having jurisdiction in affairs for which the civil law makes no provision; such as feats of arms, disputes on crests and shields, and questions of descent, in which property was not at stake. In ancient times, such courts were known to all the Celtic nations, and unknown to any of the Gothic nations. They were brought to England

by the Norman barons, and they found their home at Windsor Castle, near the marshal's residence, in the neighbourhood of St. George.

They rarely met. A prince might claim to have a court assembled. Barons and knights could be refused. Except to princes of the blood, the king said yea or nay to an appeal, according to his pleasure. When he gave his leave, the constable convened a meeting, over which the earl-marshal presided; these great officers being supposed to hold the rank of vicars-general of God and the king. Strict rules controlled these courts. A challenger was bound to state his charge against the enemy in writing. If his gage were taken up by the accused, neither of the parties could draw back. Only the king could then make peace. The battle must be fought; the time appointed for the combat being within forty days of the challenge and reply. When the adversaries met in arms, they were to finish the affair 'between two suns:' that is to say, in a single day; allowing of no rest, no pause; but pounding at each other to the death. The constable had charge of ring and arms. Lists, sixty paces long, and forty paces wide, were to be enclosed, with barriers seven feet high. The lances were to be of equal length. Before the rivals

closed in fight, the constable was to raise each visor and identify his man. Each combatant was to swear an oath that he had no second weapon, and no charm about his person; neither knife nor stone, neither herb nor amulet. The accuser had to make an oath that every article in his charge was true, and both accuser and accused were to be sworn that the appeal being granted by the court, they would either spend or be spent—slay or be slain.

Bolingbroke laid before the king, according to these rules, a statement of his grounds for charging Mowbray with disloyalty to the crown and state. These grounds were given in Mowbray's words as spoken by him on the Windsor road.

NOTE OF MOWBRAY'S WORDS.

Mowbray: We are likely to be undone.

Bolingbroke: For what?

Mowbray: On account of Radcote bridge.

Bolingbroke: How can that be? The king has pardoned us, and even declared in parliament that we have been good and loyal towards him?

Mowbray: In spite of that, he will serve us as he served others before us. He will cancel that record.

Bolingbroke: That would be a strange thing to do. Why, he has said the same before many people. How, after that, can he cancel the record?

Mowbray: It would be strange and false; but then the world is strange and false. I know very well that both your father of Lancaster and yourself were to have been put to death when you came to Windsor after the parliament. The dukes of Albemarle and Exeter, and the earl of Worcester and myself, have pledged ourselves never to assist in the undoing of any baron, save for just and reasonable cause. This malicious scheme is that of the duke of Surrey, with the earls of Wiltshire and Salisbury, in conjunction with the earl of Gloucester. These lords have sworn to ruin six of their peers; the dukes of Lancaster, Hereford, Albemarle, Exeter, and myself. Nay, they have sworn to reverse the judgment pronounced on Thomas, earl of Lancaster, by which we and others would be undone.

Bolingbroke: God defend us! It would be strange if the king consented to all that. For he has given, or seems to have given, us such good cheer, and promised to be our good lord. And I

know that he has sworn by St. Edward to be a good lord to me, and to all the rest.

Mowbray: So he has many times sworn to me on God's body, but he will keep his word no better for that fact. He is trying to draw the earl of March into the scheme of those four lords for destroying the other six.

Bolingbroke: If that be so, we can hardly stand still.

Mowbray: No, certainly. For if they cannot destroy us now, they will have both us and our houses in less than ten years' time.

Richard received this paper from his cousin of Bolingbroke's hands with transport, though affecting to regret the quarrel of his kinsman and his councillor. The knights were certain to award a day of battle, and the two men, 'hasty as the sea,' were sure to lay on to the death. One of the two must die. But he was slow to give his word, and bind them over to appear. The Court of Chivalry must meet at Windsor Castle, and the time most proper for the meeting was the festival of St. George. That date was distant; seventeen weeks ahead. Meantime, his court was going to Shrews-

bury; for Roger de Mortimer, who had crossed to Dublin, to escape embarrassment in London, was contending in a weak and pitiful fashion with the Irish septs. At Shrewsbury, Richard and his barons would be near the coast, ready to set sail in case bad news came in. The Court of Chivalry might be held on his return.

Mowbray was preparing to go down to Shrewsbury with the king; a fact which Bolingbroke could not stand. As they were mounting to depart, Bolingbroke strode up to the king, his cousin, who was seated in his saddle, and reminding him of the facts, requested him to fix a day. A crowd of peers stood round the prince. Mowbray, seeing the press of men, came up, in time to hear his majesty reply to Bolingbroke's appeal:

'Cousin, Henry of Lancaster, your petition has been read. What would you say in presence of these lords?'

Bolingbroke replied:

'I say that Thomas de Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, is a traitor, false and recreant to your majesty, your cause, your nobles, and the people of your realm.'

The royal masquer, turning to his mock

favourite, asked him in what seemed a gentle and compassionate tone:

'What say you, Thomas?'

Mowbray, unaware that his sham reign was over, hurled back taunt for taunt:

'Saving your grace, I say that Henry of Lancaster, duke of Hereford, lies, like the false traitor and disloyal subject that he is.'

'Ho! We have heard enough,' cried Richard, beckoning his nephew, the young duke of Surrey, to his side.

In such affairs, an earl-marshal had the duty of arresting the accuser and accused, and holding them in custody till the royal pleasure should be known. But Mowbray was himself earl-marshal. Had the parties been other than they were, he would have lodged them in his chamber in the Devil's tower. As Mowbray could not take himself into safe keeping, his majesty, in timely preparation for events, had privately named his nephew, the duke of Surrey, to the post of marshal.

Richard whispered in Surrey's ear; and Surrey laid his hand on Mowbray's arm; arresting him as a man impeached, and telling him he must find four

sureties of the highest rank—four dukes, his peers —to answer for him that he would appear at Windsor and abide the judgment of the court.

Bonds of the same class were required from Bolingbroke; four peers of the highest quality, who would pledge their bodies for his faith.

Mowbray now found himself deserted by the king, his master, and by the flatterers whom he had governed and despised. Duke after duke pressed up as bail for Bolingbroke. No one stood up for him. Where were his comrades, Exeter and Albemarle? Close to the prince, his challenger, offering to stand that adversary's bail! Mowbray was left alone. Leaning on the king, as on a staff, he thought himself secure against the world. Too late, he found himself betrayed by that caressing and deceitful prince, at whose entreaties he had steeped his hands in blood. The tenant of the Devil's tower was lost.

Bolingbroke chose his sureties from the crowd; his father Lancaster, his uncle York, his cousin Albemarle, and his half-cousin Surrey. Bonds being signed and entered, he was ready to set out. Mowbray, unable to find four peers for sureties, was committed to the Tower.

The fourth of his offending lords being lodged in prison, Richard set out for Shrewsbury with a lighter heart ; even though his uncle of Lancaster and his cousin of Bolingbroke were riding at his side.

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CHAPTER X.

WAGER OF BATTLE.

1398.

EIGHT weeks before the festival of St. George, Sir Peter Courtney, constable of Windsor, was commanded to receive into his custody the persons of Henry of Bolingbroke, duke of Hereford, and Thomas de Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, till the royal pleasure should be further known.

Nevill brought up his prisoner Mowbray from the Tower, and gave him up at the Constable's door for a receipt. No man had offered to become his bail: for those who might have been his bail, like Exeter and Surrey, were acquainted with their master's secrets. Courtney had no choice but to receive and to restrain his guest. As Constable, his business was to keep his prisoner safe. Lodged in the Devil's tower, where he was under guard by day and night, the murderer of Gloucester and

Arundel found himself a captive in the chambers over which he had ruled for many years.

The four dukes, Bolingbroke's sureties, brought that prince to Courtney's lodgings, in accordance with their bond. They offered to renew their bail: so that the challenger's surrender was a thing of form. Courtney renewed their bail, and Bolingbroke was free.

During the nine weeks of Mowbray's durance in the Tower, affairs at court had undergone a change. In turning against Mowbray, Richard seemed to have turned to Bolingbroke. He only seemed; but his dissembling was so perfect that his nearest comrades were deceived. What Bolingbroke asked, was always given. A royal pardon for Bolingbroke passed the seal—a pardon going back to Radcote bridge, and covering his offences, known and unknown, since that day. Nothing was done for Mowbray. Once, indeed, he was called to court, but only to be rated for his doings, and returned with added ignominy to the Tower. Following his own device, as used against the duke of Gloucester, those who had the command in council published his guilt to all the world. Three weeks before he was brought by Nevill to Windsor Castle, he had been described at

every market cross in England as a traitor to his king, an enemy to his country. Branding him as a traitor, every sheriff in the land had summoned him by name—as though he were a man in hiding—to appear and answer for his crimes. Burghers were told that no less a person than the popular idol, Henry of Bolingbroke, had denounced him as a traitor, and was pledged to prove him in mortal fight an arrant and disloyal knave. Long before the Court of Chivalry assembled, Mowbray was universally condemned.

A court was called for Sunday, five days after the festival of St. George. All dukes, earls, barons, bannerets, and knights were to attend; each man with arms and scutcheon in his place, according to his rank. They were to hear the prince's challenge, to assign a day of battle, and award, on Bolingbroke's demand, a combat to the death.

As St. George's day approached, the king gave orders that his prisoner, Mowbray, should be moved from Windsor Castle to London. On a festival of the saint, it was unseemly to have a knight of the Garter in a dungeon near his shrine. Where should the 'favourite' be lodged? Richard bethought him of a city guard. In

Carter Lane, under the shadow of St. Paul's, stood the royal Wardrobe, a place of great security, and a property of the Crown. Thither his victim was conveyed. Richard resolved to hold that victim fast. Even on St. George's day, he snatched a moment to request the mayor and sheriffs to see in person that his prisoner was kept under the strictest guard.

Yet, while the festival was on, he talked as though he were inclined to heal the quarrel. Calling the two dukes to Windsor, he forbade them to appear in arms, and hoped they would be able to agree on terms of peace. Albemarle and Surrey waited on the prince, and afterwards on the duke, with messages from his majesty. The king, they said, was willing to forgive them all offences, if they would accept his counsels and consent to live in peace. Each for himself refused. They wanted leave to fight. These facts—the king's desire to reconcile his cousin with his friend, and their refusal to adopt his counsels—were proclaimed by blare of trumpets through the royal wards and at the castle gates. Having done his duty, Richard could wash his hands of the affair!

A wooden stand was built in the upper ward, in front of which the trial might be held, and if

the king so pleased, the combat might be fought. The day was Saturday, and to give more time for preparation, his majesty ordered his Court of Chivalry to assemble on Monday, April the twenty-ninth.

Dukes, prelates, earls, and barons sat around the king; Lancaster and York, Albemarle and Dorset, Exeter and Surrey, with a multitude of barons, bannerets, and knights. Heralds called in the accuser and accused, each of whom strode into the square, accompanied by their squires. The world was with the prince; his adversary was alone. Silence being cried, Sir John Bushey, speaker of the House of Commons, opened the Court of Chivalry in his majesty's name:

'My lords!

'You know full well that the duke of Hereford has presented a petition to our lord the king, who is here present in his seat of justice, to administer right to those who shall require it of his hands this day.'

Bending a little both to the accuser and accused, the king exhorted them with his counsel:

'Make it up, my lords; it will be better so.'

Mowbray, as the party challenged and defamed, spake first, in answer to the king's advice:

'Saving your favour, my dear master, that can never be; my honour is too much at stake.'

Richard's good nature was not yet exhausted. Turning towards the prince, his majesty made one trial more for peace:

'Henry, say what you have to say against the duke of Norfolk, and why you will not make it up.'

Bolingbroke preferred to let things take their course. Two talking-knights had been appointed by the king and council; one for his side, a second for Mowbray's side; and Bolingbroke replied that his attorney was prepared to state his charge. Silence was called, and Bolingbroke's advocate rose and said:

'Dear and dread sovereign, here stands Henry of Lancaster, duke of Hereford, to declare (and I for him) that Thomas, duke of Norfolk, has received from you eight hundred thousand nobles to pay your men-at-arms, who guard your city of Calais, and has not paid them as he should have done. That is high treason. He has been at the bottom of all the treason in your kingdom for the last eighteen years. By malice and bad counsel, he caused the death of my dear uncle the duke of Gloucester, son to King Edward (whom God

assoil!), and brother of my dearest father, the duke of Lancaster.'

The king's brow darkened at these words, which told him that the prince was satisfied that murder had been done at Calais. Frowning on Bolingbroke, the king asked him whether these words, spoken by his advocate, were owned by him. 'Dear lord,' said Bolingbroke, 'those words are mine, and I demand of you the right of battle with the duke.'

Then Mowbray's talking-knight stood forth, and asked for liberty of speech. His prayer being granted by the court, he said:

'Dread sovereign, here stands Thomas de Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, who replies (and I for him), that what Henry of Lancaster has said, saving the reverence of yourself and council, is untrue, and that he has lied falsely and wickedly, like a false and disloyal knight; that he has been disloyal towards you, your crown and kingdom; and that I will prove, as a loyal knight, in arms against him.'

Bolingbroke and Mowbray were removed. The king and court consulted, and the battle was assigned, but at a distant day and in a distant place. Richard was now resolved to crush them

both, and by a single stroke. To do so safely, he must have an army at his back, and get beyond the reach of Bolingbroke's city friends. What he would do, was still a secret in his breast.

Accuser and accused were now called in to hear the verdict. Once again the king inquired if they would make things up. 'No,' answered each. Then Richard made an oath by John the Baptist that he would go no farther in this feud, but leave accuser and accused to fight their quarrel to the end. Bushey, Speaker of the Commons, in the name of king and council, gave the two knights a combat to the death.

The distant day was Monday, September 16: the distant place, a plain near Coventry. As yet, the king was hardly armed for his great stroke. He meant to banish them, as a safer plan than putting them to death by sword and axe. No man lived in exile long. Pole had died within a year; so young and hale a man as Vere had pined away in less than four years. Death would rid him of the last of his offending lords. His brother, Exeter, was collecting archers — mercenary troops, like the free-lances he had led in Italy; but they were not yet strong enough in numbers for the king to feel secure. But when

his mercenary bands were all encamped near Coventry, the king rode down, and having thirty thousand archers in his camp, he stayed the combat, threw his warder in the lists, condemned both the accuser and accused, and banished them from his kingdom; Bolingbroke for ten years, Mowbray for the whole of life.

After that royal comedy near Coventry the king returned to Windsor Castle, when the young prince came to see him, not believing that his cousin ever meant to carry out that sentence. He had done the king no wrong. If, at a former date, he had offended, he had recently received a pardon. But the king stood fast. Lancaster was in despair, for though he loved his younger children, Bolingbroke, his first-born, was the pride and passion of his heart. So far as Lancaster could move, heaven and earth were moved in Bolingbroke's behalf; but Richard, though he modified his sentence, held on stubbornly to his plan of banishing the prince.

Bolingbroke took his leave at Windsor on the 3rd of October, 1398, leaving his aged father to a brief and fatal agony. Four years were taken from his term; but Lancaster was old, and he could hardly hope to see his son again. The only

grace that Bolingbroke obtained from Richard on his last visit to Windsor, was a license to reside for six weeks at Sandgate ere he crossed the sea, and four weeks more at Calais, ere he quitted the dominions of his ancestors. To one point Richard gave his full consent. The prince was not to suffer in his titles and estates. His family rank was fixed. Heir of the house of Lancaster, he was to follow on his father's heels, and should the duke succumb, he was to step into his place as duke of Lancaster.

By way of parting grace, Peter de Bosco, the papal legate, gave a Roman bull to the banished prince, and a popinjay to the Little Queen.

In Cheapside forty thousand citizens followed Bolingbroke, not with drum and trumpet, as in other times, but with tears and groans. 'Why leave us, gentle duke?' they cried; 'this land will not be happy till you come to us again. Why leave us; you have done no wrong?' He counselled them to wait with patience. Some of the knights who rode behind him, whispered to each other: 'Look at these people! If a man would stir them up, the king, and not the duke, might have to leave.'

Mayor and aldermen rode with their idol down to Dartford; not a few of them went with him

as a body guard to Sandgate. Many citizens stayed beside him, hoping he might give the signal of resistance, till he stepped on board his vessel. To the last they fancied that the king, on better thoughts, would call him back. When he was gone, his sails behind the waves, they rode home heavily, looking to their pikes, and leaving the future in the hands of God.

CHAPTER XI.

DESERTED LITTLE QUEEN.

1399.

In spite of the Little Queen's popinjay and Saracenic damsel, Simonette, Windsor grew dull and silent as the winter deepened and the new year broke.

Groans reached the court from London, where the city guilds were one day flushed with anger and the next day broken by despair. Bad news was pouring in from every side. Roger de Mortimer, after flying from civil discords, had succumbed ingloriously on the Irish soil; leaving his wife, Lady Mortimer, a widow, and his son, Lord Edmund de Mortimer, now earl of March, a child, no more than six years old. Lady Mortimer, a weak and puling creature, a grand-daughter of the Fair Countess, was the heiress of that woman's beauty, fickleness, and greed. Her child was heir

presumptive to the English throne. Ingelram de Coucy, moved to Broussa, by command of Bajazet, until his ransom should be paid, had fallen a victim to the plague. Madame de Coucy was now a widow, duchess Philippote an orphan. Five weeks after new year's day, John, duke of Lancaster, died of a broken heart; death-stricken by the exile of his gallant son.

Except the duke of York, all Edward's sons —those

Seven fair branches springing from one root—

had withered from the earth. Even in the lower lines, the great king's issue had been sternly thinned. The king was childless. Lionel's grandson was no more. Lancaster's son, that prop of England, was a banished prince. A pall of death seemed hanging round the Castle hill.

Yet Richard, far from melting towards his cousin Bolingbroke, now struck him a more wanton and vindictive blow. When Bolingbroke came to Windsor for his farewell interview, Richard had pledged to him his royal word, that in his absence from London, nothing should be done by court and parliament to taint his title in either his father's honours or his family estates. But what were

pledges to the king? In spite of every pledge, Richard put out his hand; seized his uncle's property, suppressed the ducal peerage, and enlarged his cousin's term of banishment from six years to the whole of life. The manors confiscated to the crown included those which had belonged to Bolingbroke's wife, no less than those which had belonged to his father. Richard seized Cole Harbour as well as the Savoy. Bolingbroke had no longer a London home. To their disgust, the citizens heard that Cole Harbour, where their favourite had lived so long, was given to the king's half-nephew, the new duke of Surrey—brother of Lady Mortimer and uncle of the infant earl of March. The line of Mortimer, alike unpopular in name and record, was in future to be played against the house of Lancaster. To crown this outrage on the absent prince, Richard arrested Harry of Monmouth, now a boy of twelve, and placed him under ward.

Chaucer and his household suffered by this great reverse. Offices held by Thomas Chaucer from the duke of Lancaster were taken from the poet's son and given to William le Scrope. The poet's pension of twenty pounds a-year was fined. Chaucer's last days on earth were darkened by these troubles,

and his sadly humorous verses 'to his empty purse,' were no doubt written at this period of his life.

> To you, my Purse, unto none other wight
> Complain I: for ye be my lady dear.
> I am sorry now that ye been light,
> For, certes, but if ye make me heavy cheer,
> Me were as lief laid upon my bier;
> For which unto your mercy then I cry,
> Be heavy again or elles mote I die.

Instead of bending to this tempest like a boy, Bolingbroke sprang forward like a god. His rights were based on law. If Richard of Bordeaux were king of England, Henry of Bolingbroke was duke of Lancaster. Richard had not given him his rank as prince and duke. But he was wise and wary. Means must be prepared. Charles, father of the Little Queen, could hardly be expected to assist him in returning to his native land by force. Yet nothing less than force would serve. He quitted France for Brittany, where he had formed a friendship with the duchess, Juana of Navarre. There, Thomas of Canterbury, the banished primate, joined him. Thomas was eager to return; and like a priest, he saw no need for ships and guns. Why wait? he cried. All England was astir and

clamouring for their prince. A smack was all they wanted, with a scribe to copy proclamations, and a priest to bless their landing. Bolingbroke, though no less eager than the archbishop, was a soldier, sailor, statesman, and he understood the use of ships and guns, even in enterprises based on law and right. With the connivance of duchess Juana, he procured some boats, and silently prepared to go on board.

Richard and Isabel were at Windsor Castle, but the royal hill was a deserted place. Where was Nevill? Where was Percy? They were lately of the council, and had recently been belted by the king. But they were not at Windsor Castle, having stolen off, without a royal license, to the north. Where was Dorset? Where was Surrey? Dorset lingered in Aquitaine. Surrey was in the Irish camp. Day after day came cries for men—more men, for ships—more ships, for guns—more guns. Mounting in hot haste, the men were ready to set out—an army strong and brave, but having neither head nor soul—for that Irish camp.

All eyes were fixed on Windsor Castle, as the scene and centre of events. There, in the royal house, were the weak and frantic king, the baby and her popinjay, the widowed duchess, the orphaned

girls, and that foreign lady in her sad attire—while Ireland was ablaze, and clouds were gathering on the Breton coasts. Men felt that when the king set out on his journey towards the west—and those who hated him and loved the exiled prince, were praying day and night for him to start—events would break in tempests on that royal hill.

Before he rode from Windsor Castle, Richard proposed to hold a special tournament in honour of St. George. Clad in green uniform and bearing the Little Queen's device of a white falcon, forty of his chosen knights were ready to engage all comers. Madame Isabel and her maidens were to grace the festival and award the crown. But this festivity proved a failure. None of the greater barons graced the feast—their hearts being with the banished prince. Few of the greater prelates blessed the feast,—their hearts being with the primate in his foreign home. The Little Queen felt sad, and Windsor Castle, lighted for the feast, seemed more than ever a deserted place.

Crouching in his cabinet, afraid to look on his own servants, Richard snatched up a pen, prepared his will, appointed his executors, and wrote directions for his funeral!

Two days after his dismal festival, Richard, seeing that his peers were leaving him, turned to his doctor, his confessor, and his chamberlain for advice. Mistrusting Madame de Coucy, he wished to send her back to France, and place his half-niece, Lady Mortimer, with the Little Queen. But how was he to rid himself of Madame de Coucy? She was French. She owed her appointment to Isabel's father. Could he turn her out of doors without offending Charles? Calling in his doctor, Master Pol, and the queen's chamberlain, Peter le Vâche, he told them they were now to be the guardians of his queen. The men were stunned. He then called in the French confessor, told him what he had done, and joined him in commission with the other two. He next inquired of these new guardians whether, in their judgment, Madame de Coucy was a fit person to govern such a lady as Madame Isabel, the queen? Master Pol endeavoured to evade the question. Richard turned to Peter le Vâche. Peter was cautious, too. 'Here is the confessor,' said Peter; 'he understands French ladies better than we do; let him reply.' But priests are no less shy of laying their fingers down on anvils than doctors and chamberlains. 'No,' the confessor answered, meekly; 'the lady may be

vexed with me.' Richard insisted on hearing their opinions, and the fact of his inquiry showed them what they were to say. At length the miserable creatures answered that Madame de Coucy was a great lady, who put his majesty to much expense, by keeping horses in her stable, and employing jewellers and milliners in the town.

That was enough for Richard. Madame, he said, must pack; but while he stayed at Windsor, he was base enough to keep the secret of her dismissal from the Little Queen. Sending for Scrope, a willing agent in his dirty work, he whispered in his Treasurer's ear:

'I'll tell you what I wish you to do. When I arrive in Ireland, and you hear from me that I am there, give orders, on my account, that all the debts of Madame de Coucy and her people be paid. Count out money enough to defray the charges of her journey to Paris; let a vessel be provided for her passage; put her on board yourself and see her off with your own eyes. Then, send for Lady Mortimer, and, in my name, appoint her to the post of principal lady and governess to madame the queen.'

Creeping from his closet to the queen's apartment, Richard saluted the child and led her out.

Hand in hand he walked with her from the royal house into the lower ward, and thence into the deanery, where the dean and canons were in waiting with St. George's cloak. This garment being laid on the king's shoulder by the dean, the royal servants fell into their ranks, and the procession moved into the chapel. King and queen knelt down before the altar, while the choir sang complines, very sweetly. Richard intoned a collect, and afterwards laid his offering on the shrine. Service being done, he lifted the Little Queen into his arms, fondled her a long time, kissing her again and again, as a big brother might kiss a little child, saying to her in an under-tone:

'Adieu, ma chère! Until we meet again—adieu! I commend me to you, my little one.'

La Petite Reine began to cry. The child was fond of him. She understood that he was going away from Windsor Castle, and was frightened by the thought of seeing him no more:

'You will not leave me here, and all alone?'

'By no means, ma mie. But I must go on first, and you can then come after me.'

No word was dropt by him to his Little Queen about the cruel surprise which he had just prepared for her in the dismissal of Madame de Coucy,

the only female in her circle who had known her as a baby in her mother's house.

Leading his Little Queen back into the deanery, Richard presented her with a box of comfits. They ate these sweets, sipped a little wine, and tried to smile. But Isabel was sad. At length the hour arrived for them to part. Stooping to her waist, the king snatched up the darling once again, as though she were a favourite child, not a state victim, wedded to him by others for the sake of gain. He kissed and kissed her, saying as he pressed his lips to her young cheek:

'Adieu, adieu, ma chère! Adieu, until we meet again!'

Laying her down on the floor, he gave her up to the priests and ladies, and striding to the door, leapt to his horse, and with a roar of guns and blare of trumpets in his wake passed rapidly from her sight.

They never met again.

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTIVE LITTLE QUEEN.

1399.

RICHARD was so eager to get rid of Madame de Coucy, that within a week of his leaving Windsor Castle, he despatched an order to his council—not to Scrope privately, but to his uncle York and to his council openly—requesting them to pay Madame de Coucy's debts, and pack her off for France, replacing her near the queen by his widowed relative, Lady Mortimer.

York, as regent of the kingdom, was residing with the queen at Windsor Castle when this note came in. He had no choice but to obey. Richard was king, and in relation to the queen he was both king and spouse. Madame de Coucy was discharged, and Lady Mortimer invested with her office. But the foreign lady had a spirit. She refused to be dismissed. Holding her office from

the king of France, she owned no master but that king of France. Driven from the royal house, she yet remained at Windsor, and contrived through abigails to keep up some connexion with the queen.

These partings from her husband and her governess threw the child into a fever. York, a good and timid man, was at his wits' end what to do; and Scrope, though base enough to carry out his orders, shrank from responsibility in what concerned the queen. Madame de Coucy told them she would not go home and leave her charge behind. They heard her speech in silence. York was not the man to drive a lady from the realm by force.

On leaving Windsor, Richard had laid his hands on his young prisoners, lord Harry of Monmouth and lord Humphrey of Gloucester. Placing these boys in his camp under jealous eyes, he had carried them with him to the west, and when he sailed for Ireland, he had carried them across the sea. Bolingbroke had no fear for his son; he knew the lad's mettle, even at the age of twelve; soft as a fawn, yet hardy as a lion's whelp. But duchess Elinor was alarmed for Humphrey. Humphrey was a feeble boy, and Richard

hated him, as being the son of a man whom he had killed, and certain in the times to come, to be his mortal enemy. When the lad was carried off from Windsor Castle, duchess Elinor despaired of ever seeing her son again.

Arrived at his Irish camp, Richard sent these striplings to the front, that being the place of honour in a camp! Harry of Monmouth secretly rejoiced; he longed to hear the sounds of war; and from that Irish front he brought those spurs of knighthood, which he afterwards wore at Harfleur, Agincourt, and Dreux. Masking his vexation, Richard affected to rejoice in the young hero's valour; but when the news of Bolingbroke's landing on the Yorkshire coast arrived in Dublin, he called Sir Harry of Monmouth to his cabinet and asked him what he thought of his father and his father's doings. Quick with his tongue as with his sword, young Harry answered that he grieved to hear such news as the king told him, that he knew nothing of his father's movements, that he was too young to bear the burden of his father's faults.

No cause appeared for harshness. Only twenty men were said to have landed from the prince's ships; strange army to oppose a sovereign who

was guarded by a hundred fortresses and a hundred thousand men. Yet Richard, fretful and angry, sent his little kinsmen, Harry of Monmouth and Humphrey of Gloucester, into county Meath, where he lodged them for security in castle Trim. There, in a wretched swamp, lord Humphrey caught the malady of which he died. Sir Harry bore his lot more stoutly; but his period of confinement was not long.

York and the council stayed at Windsor with the Little Queen, not yet aware what storms were sweeping through the land. When York first heard of Bolingbroke landing on the Yorkshire coast with only twenty men, including an archbishop and his servants, he supposed his nephew had become insane. But day by day fresh news came in; such news as regents seldom have to hear. First came reports that Bolingbroke was landing at Ravenspur in a lonely swamp. No harm in that, thought York. Next came reports that he was marching through the Yorkshire wolds, his forces swelling as he passed along. York's face looked grave. When news came in that Bolingbroke was at Doncaster, and that the Nevills and Percys were joining him with all their powers, York saw that he must act. Councils

were held in Windsor, and the king's head-quarters were fixed at St. Albans. Messengers rode up to London to observe the citizens. York knew how much they were devoted to his nephew; but his messengers brought back reports which stunned him and his councillors. The citizens were under arms, not only ready to receive the prince, but to proclaim him king! While York was pondering over these reports, news came that Bolingbroke was at Leicester, on his way to London.

Sixty thousand men were now assembled at St. Albans under the royal ensign, but when York rode over to review them as the king's lieutenant, he was told by many voices that these men would never fight against the prince.

York, smitten by panic, hastened back to Windsor Castle, which he judged to be no longer safe. Where should he place the Little Queen? The Tower was no more safe than Windsor. Wallingford, a castle higher up the stream, built only for defence, and free from the encumbrance of a chapel and a royal house, appeared to him a better refuge. Placing her in the special charge of Scrope, with Lady Mortimer and Duchess Philippote in attendance, he removed the child by easy stages to Wal-

lingford. While she was on the way, news reached her escort that Bolingbroke, instead of pushing on for London, was wheeling on his right pivot, with his face towards Gloucester and Bristol. Panic seized some members of that escort. Lady Mortimer, bewildered by fears for her son Edmund, earl of March, stole off into the west, in order to conceal the boy. Scrope, whose lands were also in the west, decamped, leaving the Little Queen in charge of underlings ; a coward's act which led him swiftly, by the lines of an ideal justice, to his doom. A Bristol mob caught sight of Scrope, and knowing him as an enemy of the prince, laid hands on him. With scant regard to judge and jury, they condemned him to a traitor's death, and, hustling him to the market-place, hacked away his head.

Windsor was now deserted. York had marched into the west, and taken up his quarters in Berkeley castle. Courtney had gone to Calais to secure that stronghold. Windsor lay open to attack; and Bolingbroke, whose rapid movements dazzled every one, was now advancing towards the capital. Isabel seemed lost, but Bolingbroke, not making war on children, took the lower roads, leaving Windsor and Wallingford on his left, as places

that must fall into his hands without a shot being fired.

By his swift advance on London, Bolingbroke found himself in possession of a crown. His welcome by the citizens was frantic. Shakespeare paints the scene with hardly too much fire and colour :—

> You would have thought the very windows spake,
> So many greedy looks of young and old
> Through casements darted their devouring eyes
> Upon his visage, and that all the walls
> In painted imagery had said at once,
> Jesu preserve thee—welcome Bolingbroke!

During his exile they had called him king—*their* king; and the crown being cast away, they placed it on his head. No less than twenty thousand of the guildmen, brave, disciplined, trusty, joined his flag, and moved in all directions on the still outstanding fortresses. Windsor surrendered to a blast of trumpets. Wallingford, having the Little Queen to guard, held out some days, till news came in that all was over in the west, the king a prisoner, and his camp dispersed. The constable of Wallingford laid down his arms; yielding into captivity the Little Queen.

In company of Duchess Philippote and Simon-

ette, her Saracen maid, the child was carried to Ledes castle in Kent, an ancient house belonging to the crown which had recently been rebuilt by Wykeham. The air was good, the garden large, the castle picturesque. Ledes was the usual residence of dowager queens, as Havering was the private residence of reigning queens. At Ledes, La Petite Reine was suffered to see her friend and governess Madame de Coucy.

Madame de Coucy was the first to carry the report of Richard's deposition to the court of Charles, whose peers and ministers heard with anger and alarm that Madame Isabel had been captured and dethroned.

Parliament met. Richard being deposed, and the two little Mortimers—Edmund, earl of March, and lord Roger de Mortimer—set aside as infants, Henry of Bolingbroke was chosen and anointed king. He was their man—their king; obedient to the law, true to the commonwealth, and faithful to the cross. Nature and events had made him king. Walden, the false archbishop, was expelled from Lambeth, and Thomas, the true archbishop, resumed his place. Schism was ended, and the Church at peace. The new king's son, Sir Harry of Monmouth, coming from castle Trim to Wind-

sor Castle, was created Prince of Wales. Percy became constable, Nevil became marshal of England. Arundel's attainder was reversed, his son restored in blood and honour. Warwick was released from prison and recalled to court. The violated charters were restored; the Great Charter and the Forest Charter being recognised once more by king and parliament as the fundamental law of England. Orders were issued to the king's judges to be just in all their dealings; and the councillors were invited to be frank in speech and loyal to the laws. All suits against the citizens, contrary to their liberties, were stopped. These things were done in legal form, so that the pact between king and people, made on their day of victory, should remain on record. Even Sir Harry's creation as Prince of Wales, though held to be a privilege of the crown, was ratified, on the king's request, by a public vote. Peers, bishops, citizens, were all made partners in the new settlement.

Never had revolution so complete been made so swiftly, with so little loss of life. None but the actual murderers of Gloucester were condemned to death. Many of the king's soldiers cried for blood; especially for the blood of Exeter and Salisbury; but the new king reasoned with these

zealots in his cause, and in the end he brought them to a more pacific view.

Mowbray, the chief offender, was beyond the reach of earthly justice. Wandering to Venice, he had presented himself to the Doge as an English pilgrim, in the false name of Guilford. He had begged a galley from the Signory, and borrowed money from the bankers, for his voyage to Palestine; but Heaven had cut him down, as one unworthy of the Sepulchre, and he had died in Venice; leaving his bones to the republic, his debts to his family, and his nickname to the Devil's tower.

Next to Mowbray, the greatest criminals were Huntingdon and Rutland, now called duke of Exeter and duke of Albemarle. Huntingdon had played a leading part in the deceit at Pleshy; Rutland had gone to Calais, to be near the scene of his uncle's murder; but these noblemen stood so near the king in blood and marriage, that to take their lives was like polluting his own hearth with blood. Huntingdon was the husband of his sister, lady Elizabeth; Rutland, his cousin of the perfect blood. Elizabeth answered for her husband's faith; and how could Bolingbroke resist her prayers? The duke of York became the bondsman of his

son; answering for his loyalty to the new king, not only with his property, but with his head.

Unable to reach these criminals, except by grace and pardon which he hoped would draw them into virtue, Bolingbroke was too great a prince to make a show of justice by stamping on the meaner sort. An act of oblivion suited him, and he persuaded the unwilling Houses to cover up the past, and turn their faces towards the better days to come.

No man was lodged in jail; neither was any man abased in blood. Cole Harbour, his mother's house in Dowgate, was recovered by the king, but other manors, forfeited to the crown, were held by Henry in his grace; saying, they were his by conquest—his to give or to withhold as he saw fit; but adding with a gracious smile that he should keep them only for a time. Scrope's children prayed to have their father's land given back to them. Scrope was the basest of the base, but he was gone to his account, and Bolingbroke answered their petition that he should not take the children's bread. Unused to such royal justice, men forgot the legal heirs, the little Mortimers, in giving thanks to God for having sent them such a king.

Chaucer received not only his old pension, but

a new one, with a gift no less gracious than a pension. Near the chapel of St. Mary in the abbey of Westminster, stood a tenement in a garden. This tenement was passed to him on lease, and there, a few months after seeing his patron crowned, the poet closed his great career. His son was not forgotten by the king. Five weeks after his accession, Bolingbroke made Thomas Chaucer constable of Wallingford castle, steward of the hundred of Wallingford, steward of St. Valery, and steward of the Chiltern Hundreds. Henceforth, the poet's family were treated as connexions of the reigning house.

The fallen king was ordered to be kept in a 'safe and secret' place; but not to suffer harm, so long as he and his partisans abstained from troubling the public peace.

The Little Queen was taken into Henry's care, till his affairs were settled with the court of France. That settlement might take some time; for Charles was breathing fire and flame, and all the chivalry of France were threatening to avenge La Petite Reine. A bishop's palace, near her former residence at Windsor, seemed the fittest home for such a child. Mitford, bishop of Salisbury, a good, retiring man, unused to state affairs, was

chosen for her guardian. From the deanery of Wells, Mitford had risen through the see of Chichester to that of Salisbury. He owned a lovely manor-house at Sonning, on the Thames.

Windsor and Sonning lay in the bishop's diocese, a dozen miles apart. As chancellor of the Order of the Garter, Mitford was well acquainted with the child. At Sonning, Isabel would be near the court and Castle; so the bishop's palace on the Thames became, in her captivity, the residence of Madame la Petite Reine.

CHAPTER XIII.

A NEW YEAR'S PLOT.

1400.

On New Year's day, after a busy session, Bolingbroke, now king of England, duke of Aquitaine, and lord of Ireland, partly by the grace of God, but chiefly by the general suffrage, came to Windsor Castle for his birthday, which happened to fall on the famous and solemn festival of the Three Kings.

New Year's day that year was Thursday, and the birthday festival stood for Tuesday in the coming week. Five days seemed little for the labour to be done; decking the royal house and chapel, setting up barriers, fixing on devices, burnishing casque and mail; not to speak of game to be snared, pies to be baked, barrels to be broached, evergreens to be cut, and mistletoe to be hung. Next to St. George's day, the festival of

the Magi was the bravest gathering of the year. A pilgrim who had knelt beside the shrine at Bethlehem, always kept this day in state; but Bolingbroke had other reasons than a pilgrim's piety for wishing to keep this festival with more than regal splendour. With the old, dead year, last of the thirteen hundreds, he hoped to bury down the past, and mark this day of the Three Kings as the pacific opening of his reign.

Peace was restored. Archers and pikemen were trooping home; their end achieved, their idol seated on the throne. Towns, cities, villages, were all at rest. Some sores, indeed, were felt. Like Walden, the false archbishop, the recently created dukes were levelled to their ancient rank. The duke of Albemarle was again called earl of Rutland; the duke of Exeter, earl of Huntingdon; the duke of Surrey, earl of Kent. One measure had been meted out to all. Dorset, though the king's brother, lost his marquisate, and was again called earl of Somerset. Despencer was reduced from his new earldom of Gloucester to his ancient barony. The earldom of Wiltshire, given to Scrope, was taken back. Yet many of the late councillors kept their posts, and no one had occasion to despair of grace.

To one of these late councillors the king had been more than kind. This man was Huntingdon. Love for his sister Elizabeth, had induced the king to pardon this bad man, to keep him near his person, and restore to him his captaincy of Calais. Love for that sister had induced the king not only to pardon her bad husband, but his pupil and comrade, the young earl of Salisbury, a man whom Bolingbroke regarded with peculiar scorn. When that murder of his father and himself had been arranged at Windsor Castle, under Mowbray's auspices, Salisbury had undertaken to despatch the poor old man. Bolingbroke could forgive his own intended murderers, but not his father's; yet his sister's prayers had overcome his righteous wrath, and Salisbury's life was spared, because he had Huntingdon for his master and Lady Huntingdon for his friend.

No less than fourteen princes of the blood and their connexions rode in the king's train that New Year's day to Windsor. First came his four sons:—Harry of Monmouth, prince of Wales; Thomas, soon to be duke of Clarence; John, so famous later on as Regent Bedford; and Humphrey, afterwards to be renowned as 'good Duke Humphrey.' Next came his two half-brothers—

John, earl of Somerset, and Henry, bishop of Lincoln. Following, in their order, rode his uncle, Edward, duke of York, and his cousin, Edward, earl of Rutland. Huntingdon and Kent, issue of Joan the Fair, came next; then the young earl of Arundel, and the aged earl of Warwick; his cavalcade ending with Nevill and Percy, the new earls of Westmoreland and Northumberland. These princes and noblemen wore the king's colours, dressed as the king dressed, and seemed to think as the king thought. One heart appeared to beat in all the group.

Yet three of these great peers had murder in their souls. Riding at the king's side and eating at the king's table, they were scheming, as they rode and feasted, how they might betray him and his innocent children to a violent death.

These lords were his brother-in-law, Rutland, his cousin, Huntingdon, and his half-nephew, Kent.

Huntingdon, the man so lately pardoned, and so highly favoured, was the leader of this New Year's plot. Frenzied by the loss of his ducal cap and sword, and unappeased by his captaincy of Calais, he was conspiring with Kent and Rutland, Salisbury and Despencer, backed by some other

malcontents, to turn the holy festival of the Three Kings into a scene of blood. His project was to set on Henry and his sons at Windsor Castle, and having murdered them, one and all, to march on Sonning, release the Little Queen and take the field in Richard's name; deceiving both the queen and people by pretending that the captive king was in his camp. Richard had a confessor, called Father Maudlin, so like himself in person, that he was supposed to be his bastard brother. He had often been mistaken for the king. This man, the plotter meant to dress up in royal robe and lodge in a royal tent. Under this puppet king, he hoped to rouse the shires, especially in the west, where Richard had been rarely seen. If Isabel could be deluded into leaving Mitford's house, the ignorant yeomanry and gentry might be easily deceived. In time the plotters might be strong enough to assail the Tower.

According to Huntingdon's plan, the king and princes were to perish by the knife. In coldest blood, this pupil of Della Scala, sitting at the king's board, not only gave the king, his wife's brother, and the four young princes, his wife's nephews, to the knife, but hoped to do this sanguinary work with his own hand. Huntingdon proposed to enter

Windsor as a guest, to pass into the children's chamber as a kinsman, and to murder them on the domestic hearth. His hands all stained with blood, he meant to ride on Sonning, to deceive the bishop of Salisbury and the Little Queen, and to commit that innocent child to the mischances of a civil war. Even in his Italian days, when serving with the refuse of mankind for plunder, Huntingdon had never been engaged in a more hideous and revolting crime.

That New Year's morning, while he rode in the king's train to Windsor, wearing the king's colours, his confederates in this plot were massing their adherents in the roads near Kingston bridge. Salisbury was there, having with him the deposed king's confessor, Father Maudlin, now to personate the king. Not far off lay Despencer, the physician Pol, the abbot of Westminster, and the false archbishop Walden. There they stood; straining their eyes towards Windsor, waiting for the hour to march. Each partner in the plot had raised a troop of men, and bought a service of covered carts; tenants and followers whom they trusted; carts like those employed by the great lords for carrying arms and mail. According to Huntingdon's

scheme, the men were to be hidden in those carts, and driven to Windsor Castle, where the carts, being marked as those of the earls of Rutland, Huntingdon, and Kent, would be allowed to pass within the Castle gates. At tournaments the knights sent in their lances, mail, and other armour, in such covered carts. A corner of the ward was kept for them, and there the plotters expected that these men would lie unseen and unsuspected, till the time arrived for them to strike their blow. A signal for the rising was arranged. That signal being heard, the men were to spring from their carts, and, sword in hand, rush on the king's guards and porters, sparing no man in the royal livery; while Huntingdon, Kent, and Salisbury, having first slain the king by treachery and surprise, were to break into the king's house, and cut off his progeny, root and branch.

Late in the afternoon of that memorable New Year's day, a scene occurred in the royal house, which brought the king's false friends directly face to face with the new policy, and the situation made by that new policy. At dinner, the conversation had been given to arms and horses, and the favours to be worn in casque and sleeve; but after dinner

other and more dangerous questions were provoked. What more were they to do with the discrowned king? How were they to treat the Little Queen? Richard in the Tower was a pretender to the crown, and feudal sovereigns brooked no rivals near the throne. Some of the king's councillors desired to put the uncrowned king beyond the reach of harm; by which they meant beyond the reach of doing harm to them. Why so? asked some of those who knew the king's mind. Peers and burgesses had spoken, and the king had ratified their voice. What need was there for changing what had just been done? Still, some of the greatest lords, including the duke of York, Thomas archbishop of Canterbury, the young earl of Arundel, the new earl of Westmoreland, the new earl of Northumberland, his son Harry Hotspur, and the aged earl of Warwick, throwing themselves on their knees before the king, begged him to remember the welfare of his crown and kingdom. Richard was a cause of strife. He had been lawfully deposed. So long as he was left alive, the new settlement in Church and State might any day be overthrown.

Henry eyed these councillors earnestly before

he spake. Looking from one to other, he replied to each and all:

'Cousin, archbishop of Canterbury—good uncle of York—you, earl of Arundel—you, Constable, earl of Northumberland—you, Marshal, earl of Westmoreland—you, earl of Warwick—and you, Harry Percy! Consider well amongst yourselves what you require from me. King Richard has been our sovereign lord a long time. He was sentenced and condemned in open parliament; his sentence was, imprisonment for life. I marvel you should ask me such a thing. Do you suppose I can do this at your bidding? No, so help me God. I will never act in opposition to an open parliament.'

The councillors feigned to be content.

Next morning, Friday, many of them left the Castle, to prepare, as they pretended, for the tilting-match. Huntingdon, Kent, and Rutland took their leave, bidding his majesty goodbye with cheer, and riding off each man to his own county, where he hoped to gather in fresh forces for his murderous enterprise on the king's birthday.

Henry remained at Windsor with his children;

getting ready for his festival, which he proposed to make a family gathering of the princes and supporters of his house. On Tuesday next, the day of the Three Kings, the crowned crusader would be thirty-four years old.

CHAPTER XIV.

NIGHT OF THE KINGS.

1400.

'WHY, Bess, what mean these tears?' asked Huntingdon, as he was parting from his wife, the king's sister, who had pledged her faith so deeply for his loyalty to the crown and state. 'What mean these tears?'

Lady Huntingdon was alarmed at her husband's words without exactly knowing why. A passionate love connected her with the king her brother; girl and boy being both the children of John of Gaunt by Duchess Blanche of Lancaster, the lady who shines so graciously in Chaucer's verse. They had been boy and girl together in the Savoy, and the love between them had increased with age. Huntingdon was going from her house in haste and secresy. His manner was abrupt, his accent sharp. To her appeal for some

account of what he was doing in so strange a mood, he answered roughly:

'You were glad enough when the king your brother put down the king my brother. Why are you now in tears?'

These words alarmed her more and more. Was anything in his mind against the king her brother, who had lately done so much for them and for their friends?

Turning from the princess to his daughters, Huntingdon said simply, 'Kiss me, girls.'

These girls, though little more than children, were already married: one of them to Vere, earl of Oxford, nephew and heir of the late favourite; the second to Mowbray, son of the king's great enemy, the man who had died in Venice and had left his memory in the Devil's tower. Both matches had been made by Richard, in despite of Bolingbroke. Taking kisses from the girls, Huntingdon said to them, in words of seeming mystery:

'Adieu, my girls. I commend you to God. Pray for me.'

With these distracting words, fated to be the last words spoken by Huntingdon to wife and child, he rode away, heading for Kingston bridge, where

he expected to find his colleagues ready to march on Windsor, break into the king's house, cut down the guards, and kill the king. Hapless wife, and hapless little girls!

On Sunday morning, while the royal family were in St. George's chapel hearing mass, Huntingdon was greeting his confederates on the bridge. Kent and Salisbury had arrived, with all their archers and men-at-arms. Both men were Huntingdon's nephews: Kent by blood, and Salisbury by marriage. All were close connexions of Edmund de Mortimer, earl of March; in whose behalf, next after that of the royal captive in the Tower, they were proposing to make the coming festival of the Three Kings the darkest day on record.

Rutland, who should have been with them at Kingston, neither came in person nor sent excuse. In that man's absence they were hardly safe. A false and whining wretch, he had already—in his short and turbulent career—betrayed a dozen comrades to the block. Where was he now? Hour after hour passed on, and yet no Rutland came. At noon they had to take their measures for the march. At night they should be close on Windsor, with their ground laid out, and their positions

taken up. Stowing a number of their men into the covered carts, they yoked the horses, and despatched their train towards Windsor park. At dusk the other men fell in, and marched off, silently and swiftly, taking the road by way of Staines to Colnbrook bridge, which Huntingdon proposed to occupy in force, cutting off the king's retreat from Windsor on his capital.

Ere setting out, Huntingdon despatched a mounted man in search of Rutland, with a letter, urging him not to fail his comrades at the rendezvous by Colnbrook bridge. When Huntingdon's note arrived in London, Rutland was sitting down to dinner with the duke his father. York observed the paper and inquired:

'What letter have you there?'

'My lord,' said Rutland, taking off his cap, 'excuse me, this is not an affair in which you are concerned.'

'Show me the letter. I will judge of that myself.'

Rutland, in obedience to his father, handed up the note. York read the words, and glanced uneasily at his son. What was the meaning of that rendezvous at Colnbrook bridge? Abashed with shame and overcome by fear, Rutland gave

way at once. York saw that something was amiss, gravely amiss; and he compelled the poor conspirator to confess. Rutland pulled out a paper from his vest, bearing the signatures of Huntingdon, Kent, Salisbury, Despencer, and others, by which they had undertaken, each with the other, to kill the king and all his progeny at Windsor Castle on his birthday.

'Saddle my horses instantly,' cried York to his attendants.

Flashing from the seals and signatures of that paper towards his son, the duke stormed on:

'Hey! Traitor to King Richard, thou wouldst now be traitor to King Henry? Have I not given myself in pledge for thee—body for body, goods for goods—in open parliament? Thou seekest to ruin and destroy thy father? By St. George, thou shalt be hung, not I!'

Mounting his horse, the aged duke set out for Windsor, hoping to see the king that night—midwinter though it were—and be the first to tell him of the danger in which he stood.

The duke being gone in that high temper, Rutland began to see his peril. Should his father be the first to warn the king, he was himself a ruined man. That seal, that signature, would

send him to the block. But how could he divert the blow? In one way only; he must over-ride his father, be the first at Windsor, throw himself at the king's feet, betray his comrades, and defeat their plot. Thus, and thus only, he might hope to be forgiven.

Mounting his horse, and riding for his life, he reached the Castle gates, where he learned that the duke his father had not yet arrived. The winter night was on. Entering the Castle gates, he ordered them to be closed and locked, and taking up the keys went forward through the lower ward and by the keep into the royal cabinet. Finding the king within, he dropped on his knees, put up his hands in tears, and begged to be forgiven his many crimes. Staring at the prince in wonder, Henry exclaimed:

'Fair cousin, you have done no wrong.'

Only two days had passed since Rutland left the royal family at Windsor Castle. What offence could he have done since then? He only went to fetch his mail and casque. What harm could he have done?

Then Rutland, sobbing out his villanies, offered to reveal the whole conspiracy, and send his colleagues to the block, if Henry would agree to spare

his life. The king desired him to go on. He gasped out all his details, one by one; gave up the names of Huntingdon and Kent, Salisbury, Despencer, and the rest; explained the part each member was to play, the number of their men, the roads they were to march, the grounds they were to occupy, the modes in which their blows were to be dealt. He told the king how they intended to surprise and cut him down, and how the princes were to be hunted out and butchered in their rooms. He reported how the Little Queen was to be entrapped, and how the false priest Maudlin was to play the part of puppet king.

Henry, after listening to the end of this strange narrative, replied:

'Cousin, if all this tale be true, we pardon you; if not, you shall repent of it.'

Arriving in the dark, York rattled at the gates. Being led into the royal cabinet, he threw himself before the king, and showed the papers handed to him by his son, with all the signatures and seals attached. The king had now no doubts to overcome. The tale was true, the danger nigh. Another hour, and he might have to fight his way, not only through the murky night, but through a ring of steel and fire. In front of peril he sprang

up to meet his foes. The weapons must be sharp, the horses fleet, that meant to close on Bolingbroke.

Vespers were sounding, and the officers of his household were at prayers. So much the better for his majesty. One word to a trusty servant, and eight horses, saddled in the royal ward, were standing at his beck, beside the private gate. His boys were fetched, a hint was dropped into Rutland's ear, and then the king and his four sons, springing to their seats, rode silently into the little park. Henry, refusing escort, acted through that winter night as captain, scout, and guard. Threading the bye-lanes, trotting through the woods, he headed on for London, keeping, even in the darkness, clear of the great roads, and coming to the city gates without an accident by nine o'clock.

In London he was joyously received. Rumours had gone about the streets all night, that a great force of rebels was afield near Staines, and that 'their king' was in some jeopardy at Windsor Castle. As the king rode in, Harry of Monmouth at his side, the younger children in his wake, the citizens rent the skies with shouts, and lighted bonfires in his path.

Acting on the king's hint at Windsor, Rutland

slipt round to Colnbrook, where he joined his colleagues, Huntingdon and Kent, saying he was come either to live or die with them. He found the plotters there in force; and Huntingdon, secure in his position on the Windsor road, proposed to rest his troops all night, and march on Windsor Castle at the dawn of day.

The citizens placed themselves entirely at the king's disposal. Flying bands rode out that night, feeling for the enemy, and cutting off his scouts, as well as stopping his supplies. These city bands, whose cry for blood had been refused by Bolingbroke, now clamoured more and more for justice on the traitors. Henry went down to see his captive in the Tower. Henry was high and stern.

'With much ado, I saved your life. Now you would have me murdered by your brother and his accomplices, the earl of Kent and lord Despencer.'

Richard protested, saying he was ignorant of the plot:

'So help me God, I know nothing of the affair. I want no changes; I am well content.'

Leaving his hapless cousin in the Tower, Henry took up his lodging for the night, not in his own house, Cole Harbour, but beyond the

walls, in the great priory of St. John of Jerusalem in Clerkenwell. He disclaimed to lie inside the city, like a prince besieged in his own capital. Pilgrim and prince, he made appeal to knights and citizens alike. Each responded to his call, in this first trouble of his reign. Francis, the mayor, replied to his appeal:

'Sire, we have made you king, and king you shall be.'

In the king's name, but under the mayor's auspices, offices were opened in the city for enrolment; the time of service being fifteen days, the wages of service, eightpence for each lance, ninepence for each bow. At eight o'clock next morning, more than sixteen thousand men were under arms.

At noon that day, Huntingdon and the rebels under him marched on Windsor, forced the Castle gates, and broke into the royal house. When told that Henry and his sons were gone to London, he refused to hear such nonsense. They were hiding in the deanery, in the chapel, in the towers, in the underground galleries. Room by room, corridor by corridor, he searched the royal house. Not finding them, he pushed into the chapel and the cloisters, into the canons' houses and the poor

knights' lodgings, expecting everywhere to unearth his prey. Still baffled in his search, he stove in doors, and tore down tapestries. Disgusted with his search—his failure—he left his riff-raff in possession of the Castle, and returned to Colnbrook bridge, to warn his colleagues of the king's escape.

The riff-raff carried on his work. Where he had forced in doors and torn down arras, they stove in ale-casks, cut up furniture, and carried off plate. In five hours, Windsor Castle was a wreck.

Huntingdon, who had the training of a soldier, saw that he must strike his blow at once. That Henry was in London he was sure. How far the citizens were with him he was not so sure. That was the point to ascertain. Drawing his men from Windsor, he advanced on Brentford, where he learned from trusty scouts, not only that the city was in arms for Henry, but that Henry was already on the road. Feeling his way towards Kensington, he found the king intrenched on that commanding height. Retreat or capture was his only choice; so, late at night, with strong misgivings in his heart that everything had been staked and lost,

Huntingdon faced about, and with his back on London and his front towards Colnbrook bridge, he rode on heavily through the wintry night.

Thus ended Monday night, so famous as the Night of the Kings.

CHAPTER XV.

EXIT LITTLE QUEEN.

1400-1.

Bolingbroke greeted his thirty-fourth birthday on that festival of the Kings, from his proper throne—a saddle. Up before day, and on the road betimes, he made for Hounslow, where his camp was pitched, and his banner raised. His force was scanty, for his citizen columns were not yet in line; but Henry rode on, fearlessly towards the front at Colnbrook, where the spoilers of his Castle were in strength. The veteran Warwick trotted by his side. Warwick was one of those great lords, who, in and out of parliament, were urging him to crush the rebels and remove the captive king, in order to secure the public peace.

On reaching Hounslow, Henry pushed his scouts along the road towards Windsor. They reported that the rebels were in force at Colnbrook

bridge, a point from which he foresaw that they must be driven before the masses of his army could advance. The king pulled up and rested on the heath. Arundel and the Londoners were expected, but were not yet up.

'Thomas,' said the king to Warwick, 'I marvel what is keeping our good cousin Arundel and the citizens so long?'

'Dear Sire,' replied the veteran peer, 'if you had followed the advice of your commoners in open parliament, there would have been no occasion for this day.'

Warwick referred to both the king and Huntingdon, but with a special accent on the name of Huntingdon. Henry's own heart was galled at the despoiler of the house, the would-be murderer of his children. But he held his passion under guard:

'What reason had I, Thomas, for putting such a lord to death? He had done nothing amiss to me. Besides, I was not the king. What right had I, then, to put him to death? But, by St. George, if I should meet him now, one of us will die!'

At twelve o'clock, a rider, mounted on a great horse, bearing a great banner, rode into the king's

camp. That man was Walter, lord Fitzwalter, chief banneret of the city, and the flag he bore aloft was the ancient standard of St. Paul. Behind that rider and that banner, marched the city bands.

'Wine, wine!' cried Henry to his servants, as he saw the guildmen file into his camp. Wine was brought in. Sipping the liquor, Henry passed the cup to Warwick, saying to the old fighting man:

'Now we shall have a glorious day.'

Bolingbroke knew the mettle of his city bands.

'Advance, banner!' cried the sovereign, turning by the shorter road to Windsor.

Huntingdon fell back on Colnbrook, crossed the bridge, and wheeled on Maidenhead. There, Kent took ground, and held his own; praying his uncle to retire by way of Henley bridge, and promising to hold the double bridge at Maidenhead till all their troops were safely over. As the royal columns hove in sight near Colnbrook, Rutland turned back, and met them with a cry, 'They flee, they flee!' pretending that he had been fighting with the rebels, and had driven them back in rout. Henry, who understood his cousin's game, pushed onwards. Men like Huntingdon and Kent are not repulsed by games of brag. For three days Kent

defended Maidenhead, nor was he driven away until the king himself came up. Even then, the lad retired in order; falling back, first on Oxford, then on Woodstock, finally on Cirencester; showing such qualities, as in a better cause, and under nobler captains than his uncle Huntingdon, might have raised him into the rank of English heroes.

Huntingdon had time to visit the Little Queen at Sonning and deceive her by an idle tale of having captured Windsor, driven the usurper to the Tower, and freed her husband from his dungeon. Richard, he told her, was at large, and at the head of a great army, in the western shires, where he expected her to join him. Isabel believed his lies. Huntingdon was her brother-in-law. Why should he deceive her? Gladly, she tore the Lancastrian badges from her clothes and arras. Gladly, she signed a proclamation, ready drawn for her by Huntingdon, denouncing Henry as a rebel and usurper. Gladly, she quitted Sonning, on her way, as she supposed, to Windsor, since the Castle was in loyal hands. But Huntingdon, aware that Henry was master of both Windsor and Maidenhead, retreated with his captive on the river line towards Wallingford and Abingdon.

Kent, Salisbury, and Despencer, halted at Ciren-

cester. Pitching his camp outside the town, Kent, followed by Salisbury and Despencer, rode through the gates into the market-place, where he announced that Henry had been put down, and king Richard set up again. Kent called on the citizens to arm, promising them that in two days they should see their king. Maudlin was in his camp, ready to personate the king. This done, Kent stept into a tavern, ordered supper to be served, and sent a messenger for the mayor.

While Kent was at supper, an archer of the king's guard slipped into the town without being noticed by his men. This archer rode to the mayor's house, told him the truth, and gave him the king's instructions how to act. The mayor excused himself to Kent; called in the chief citizens, and asked them which of the two kings they would serve. The men of Cirencester were prepared to live and die for Bolingbroke.

Deceived by the appearance of the town, Kent set no watch, brought in no guns, and named no captain of the gates. After supper, he heard from a tapster that a man in the king's livery was in another room. Kent forced the door, insulted the archer, and tore away his badge. The man resented his ill-treatment. Kent replied, that he

should have him hung next morning from the tavern sign. A row ensued; the mayor and citizens came up; and in the struggle, Kent was killed. Salisbury, coming to his colleague's aid, was also killed. Despencer, hearing the clash of swords, and mortally afraid, stole out, and getting on the shingles, dropt into a yard, and in the darkness of the winter night escaped into the woods. Hiring a horse he rode to Bristol, where he was caught, conducted to the market-place, and hacked to death.

Kent, Salisbury, and Despencer killed, the movement ceased; the pikemen marched to their own shires; glad to find that Henry accepted their excuses that they had obeyed their lords, not knowing in what cause they were to fight.

Huntingdon, unable to make head against the king, retreated from the Thames, dispersed his troops, abandoned the Little Queen, and struck for the coast, where he hoped to hire a boat, and join the king's enemies across the sea. Storms drove him back. Landing on the Essex shore, he hid himself in the slob, where he was found by peasants, who, remembering him at Pleshy, conducted him to that castle and delivered him over to the guard. The people, hating him as one of

their old master's murderers, led him to the ramparts, threw him down, and drove a chopper through his neck.

Too young to be treated as a criminal, Isabel de Valois, once again a captive, was removed from London to the pleasant house and park of Havering. Henry appeared to have changed his plans. Havering was the dower house of the reigning queen. Henry was a widower. Isabel was the only lady in his country bearing the rank of queen. To lodge her at Havering was to recognise her station as an English queen. Henry was not a man to act without a motive. Was the Little Queen's removal to Havering an act of policy, which suited Henry, till the question of her future was arranged between the courts? Charles was disposed to murmur, and proposals were in hand for an invasion of England in connexion with a Scottish raid. But Henry was arranging with his northern neighbour, and a plan was growing in his mind for sealing the peace with France by fresh alliances between the reigning kings.

Isabel was a virgin bride. A papal dispensation would dissolve her union with the fallen king; and dispensations were not hard to get, when

princes, and especially crusading princes, asked for them in a pressing voice. The match he thought of, was not for himself, but for his son. The Prince of Wales was free. Boy and girl were of an age; Harry of Monmouth, just thirteen, Isabel de Valois three months younger than the prince. Harry, a tall and handsome fellow, quick, adventurous, masterful, had in his mien and character the promise of a great career. Already prince and duke, he was in time to be a king. By listening to his suit, La Petite Reine would lose no particle of her dignity. At her own will, she might return from Havering house to Windsor Castle; a security for peace between two proud and mettlesome courts.

If Isabel and Isabel's family had listened to this suit, there would have been no Agincourt, no siege of Rouen, no Bedford regency, no Joan of Arc. But no such golden future was in store for either France or England.

Isabel adored the weak, bad man, who had kissed her cheek, fed her on comfits, called her his little sister, fingered her guitar, and sung with her at morning mass. Sweet mystery of the female heart, baffling all science, bearing down all logic, for the sake of love! A broken man—discrowned,

impoverished, and imprisoned—a man not only cruel, weak, and false, but older than her own father —held her childish heart against a prince of her own age, the handsomest stripling, and the greatest hero of her time!

She would not listen to his suit. The peace was ruptured, and the child that might have reigned at Windsor, went to her hotel on the Seine, to be the witness and the victim of a sanguinary strife.

Exit Little Queen!

CHAPTER XVI.

DONA JUANA.

1403–4.

THE Little Queen had barely set her foot on the soil of France, before another mistress came from that country to Windsor Castle, in the person of that Doña Juana of Navarre, widow of Jean, late duke of Brittany, who is known in our poetry and tradition as the Witch Queen.

Doña Juana was a close connexion of the Little Queen; her mother, Jeanne de France, being aunt to Isabel's father, Charles; so that Juana was first cousin to the king of France. Close ties of marriage had cemented this close tie of blood. Juana's eldest son, now duke Jean of Brittany, was husband to Isabel's sister, Jeanne of France. Her daughter, Marie, was the wife of Isabel's cousin, the duke of Alençon. Yet this ripened widow had no objection to dispute the title of

queen consort of England with her little kinswoman. Coarse and selfish, but of stately and attractive presence, Doña Juana was both willing and able to exchange a ducal for a royal throne.

Doña Juana's stock was bad. Her father, Don Carlos of Navarre, had well deserved his name of Carlos the Wicked. He had brought her up in penury and misery; and the evils of that early training clung to her through life. A lean and hungry court, like that of Nantes, had rather sharpened than appeased her appetite for gold. From bishoprics, down to porters' badges, she had put up everything for sale. She had sold her ports, her sailors, and her children. She had stood up on the market-cross and sold herself.

The purchaser was Bolingbroke; the price a royal crown. Yet Doña Juana felt no love for either England or the English king. She wanted money and the worth of money. From the moment of her setting foot in Kent, her only thought was how to rob the country and to fool the sovereign—for the benefit of her foreign brood.

That brood was large and hungry as herself. When Henry married her, she was the mother of nine children, eight of whom were still alive. Jean,

her eldest son, was duke of Brittany—the one great fact of which her politic suitor took account. Arthur, her second son and favourite, was Count de Richmont—Earl of Richmond in the English peerage—and regarded as an English prince. Her younger sons were boys. Of her five living daughters, the eldest, Marie, was Alençon's wife; the second, Blanche, was Armagnac's wife.

Her dealing with that elder girl, now duchess of Alençon, was a tale, that even on the day of her marriage to King Henry, lowered and darkened over many lives—most darkly over Harry, Prince of Wales.

Marie of Brittany was a girl of the same age as Harry of Monmouth. Eldest born, she stood in order of succession to the duchy next after her brothers, and considering how the war devoured male candidates, Marie was not unlikely to succeed. When Bolingbroke saw her first, she had only one brother—Jean, the boy who had now become reigning duke. Marie was then a pearl of price. Bolingbroke had proposed his son for her, and his suit being backed by England, articles for the match had been arranged. Dowry and residence had been fixed. Brest, an English city, had been given up to the Bretons as a bridal present, and

the settlement was regarded as complete. Harry of Monmouth had been told that Marie of Brittany—a young and charming princess—was his little sweetheart, by-and-by to be his wife. These tales had sunk into his heart, and stirred the earliest flutter in his veins. His sweetheart and his future wife! Pictures of her had been shown to him, and messages from her brought to him. The prince had learned to think of Marie as his own.

A wicked man, and still more wicked woman, had stept into the circle, like a necromancer and a witch. Jean, duke of Alençon, knowing the lady's avarice, had sent to tempt Juana. In exchange for Brest, the English were to have had a handsome dowry with the bride. Alençon had proposed to take her at a lower price. Unable to resist a bribe, Juana had given her daughter to Alençon.

Two years older than Harry of Monmouth, Alençon was, in age and rank, a suitable match for Marie. Had he wooed and won her in the way of honour, nothing could have been alleged against their union; but he knew of the arrangements with the English prince; he knew that Brest had been surrendered on the strength of those arrange-

ments; but he also knew that Bolingbroke was absent in the Holy Land. Alençon had engaged the sordid mother to break her contract and to sell her child.

When Bolingbroke came back from Palestine, the thing was done, and not to be undone by words. No longer in the heyday of his youth, he looked on facts with a victorious eye. Marie was not the prize she had been; other sons were born, who stood between her and the duchy. Vexed by the deceit, he hid his chagrin, and contrived to keep on friendly footing with Juana. Wanting her help, he overlooked her perfidy, and she repaid him for the loss of Marie, by her secret aid in hiring boats and men for his great enterprise.

But Harry of Monmouth, outraged in his boyish love and pride, had kept alive the memory of her sordid act. Bad blood divided him for ever from the woman whom he knew to be a trickster, and believed to be a witch. Alençon had a saucy tongue, and some of his ribald words were brought to Harry's ear. That prince, he heard, described the king, his father, and himself as murderers and usurpers, who ought to be hunted down by honest men. The lad was deeply hurt; but he was young and could afford to wait. A day was

coming when Jean d'Alençon and Harry of Monmouth would be face to face and point to point—at Agincourt. As to the wicked woman who had promised him her child, and afterwards sold her to another man, a day of reckoning was to come, but not till he had suffered at her hands more blighting and enduring injuries.

On learning that his father was proposing to Doña Juana, the Prince of Wales felt stunned. In Harry's mind, two sentiments held their places side by side—devotion to the memory of that mother who had been so dearly prized, so early lost—and loyalty to the wishes of that father who had made him duke and prince. For him these loves were single, undivided, and inseparable. To see a second woman in that mother's place, was bad enough; but for that second woman to be the sorceress Doña Juana, seemed to him nothing less than a defilement of his home. Henry and his council had, as they believed, good reasons for the match. Juana ruled her son, the duke. Through her, they thought of ruling Brittany, and checking France.

Harry of Monmouth steeled his heart against such sacrifice. He stood aloof, and had no part in the affair. At Calais, he refused to cross the

sea, and welcome this new mistress to the royal house. Juana used her power. Angry with her stepson, she contrived to get him called to England, but forbidden to approach the court. St. George's festival found him absent from Windsor Castle, his stall in the chapel empty, and his chargers in the stalls masterless. Aged, prudent, passionless, the king regarded his son's outbreak as a sign of disobedience and disloyalty. Juana was his queen, and must be treated with respect. What Harry of Monmouth suffered in his soul was never told. A penance was enjoined. The prince was to remain away from court. His seat at council, like his stall at Windsor, was unfilled. The king refused to see him, write to him, or receive messages from him. His liberty was not restrained, but he was watched by loyal eyes. Chaucer the younger, as a kinsman, was required to watch his conduct and report on his behaviour to the king.

A season of regret and penitence set in; of very lowly and submissive bearing towards the king. But towards the queen — the Sorceress queen—no power on earth could induce Harry of Monmouth to unbend his proud reserve. In grace or out of grace, he was resolved to owe no favour to the Navarrese.

Weeks, months, passed by. Juana reigned on the Castle hill; her stately figure showing to great advantage on the balcony and at the banquet. Henry refused to see his son. This exile from his father's sight was gall and wormwood to the prince. From Waltham Abbey, he addressed his father in a penitent letter, charged with his lowliest duty and his tenderest love. He thanked the king for having sent him news of the 'peace and marriage concluded,' and affected to rejoice with him in 'the likeliness of a succession of bodily heirs.' For not coming over to the bridal rites, he made his best excuses. First, he said the king had omitted to tell him where the rites would be held; next, he said, he had been kept back by a vow, made in a storm at sea, that before stepping on board another boat, he would pay a visit to Santiago—which act of pilgrimage he had not yet been able to perform. On other points, he referred to his 'cousin Chaucer,' whose good reports of him he trusted had already reached the king.

Juana was no stranger to the royal hill; her mother, Jeanne de France, being a daughter of that Jean le Bon, who had lodged at Windsor, and had left his memory in King John's tower. But Henry

had no time for dallying in his forest home with his mature but comely bride. The Welsh were up in arms; Glendower was recognised by the French as Prince of Wales. Hotspur and Douglas, patching up their border feuds, were marching through the west: each seeking their own ends, but prating of the rights of Mortimer, earl of March. When war broke out, the sword of Sir Harry was needed in the west. Juana frowned; but Henry was a king of facts. The prince laid down his penitential garb, returned to camp, took up his place in front, and on the field of Shrewsbury, where Hotspur fell before his onset, proved himself worthy to be called his father's son.

Juana's malice followed the young prince from court to camp, and afterwards from camp to court.

Sobered by their news from Wales, the court of France appeared more friendly towards the English king; and Henry's councillors made a fresh attempt to gain the hand of Madame Isabel for the Prince of Wales.

A girl of sixteen summers, Madame Isabel bore the name of Queen of England. Harry was eager to obtain her; first, because he had known her long and liked her much; and next, because she was of higher name and loftier lineage than

that Marie of Brittany whom he had lost. Pride is the salve of love.

Again, Juana, in her feminine malice, crossed his suit. Her son, Duke Jean, being married to Jeanne de France, and her daughters, Marie and Blanche, to Alençon and Armagnac, the sorceress turned the female influence at the court of Paris as she pleased. Working through these women, aided by magicians and confessors, she contrived to set up Charles of Orleans as a rival to the English prince. Charles, a cousin of La Petite Reine, was on the spot. A man of flowery tongue and delicate fancy, he appealed to Isabel in sonnets. Isabel listened into love and wedlock. Harry soon heard from his friends in Paris, that through the Witch-queen's sorceries, his second sweetheart had been snatched from his pursuit, and married to another man.

Older in years, riper in sentiment, than on the day of his first mortification, Harry was now more sensitive to public scorn. As with Alençon, so with Orleans; in a rage not always silent, he was working up his heart against the day when they should meet in combat—front to front, point raised to point—at Agincourt.

So also with the wicked queen. Juana's day stood farther off. Harry retired to his house in Dowgate ward, leaving that witch to reign on the royal hill. But that black time was looming in the distant sky.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONSTANCE OF YORK.

1405.

On the morrow of St. Valentine's day, a tall, sad-looking lady, verging on middle age, and wearing a widow's garments, came into Windsor town.

The king was absent from his Castle, but the chapel, and the cloisters, and the inner gate, were open to every passer-by. That tall, sad-looking lady knew the place, and had a right of entry to the upper ward and privy lodgings; but she kept herself in shade, and for the most part out of sight. About her person she concealed a bunch of keys, made by a cunning smith, who understood his craft, and was familiar with the locks and fastenings of the royal house. Those keys were master keys, by means of which a man might open any door, and pass from room to room, from gallery into gallery, without the help of

either page or abigail. The lady had a pass-key to the gate, called the south port, going out from the privy lodgings by way of the Devil's tower into the park.

That lady's name was Constance; Lady Constance of York. By birth a princess of the blood, she was near of kin to Henry and his sons. A daughter of the duke of York (now gone to his account), Lady Constance was Henry's cousin in the first degree. A daughter of Doña Isabel of Castile, sister of the duchess of Lancaster, she was also first cousin to the king's half sister, Lady Catherine, queen of Castile. Save as brother and sister, man and woman could hardly stand in closer kinship to each other than the absent sovereign and the tall, sad-looking lady with the widow's garb and bunch of keys, now moving stealthily about his house.

In spite of her high rank, royal alike in England and Castile, this Lady Constance was a frail and flighty woman, the reproach and scandal of her race. She sprang, in fact, from a debased and monstrous root. Her mother, Doña Isabel of Castile, a daughter of Don Pedro the Cruel, had spent her youth in wantonness, her womanhood in remorse. Doña Isabel had, in truth, been born

in shame; her mother, Maria de Padilla, being the paramour, not the wife, of Don Pedro. Pedro's own mother, Doña Maria of Portugal, had been put to death by her own father as a thing too vile to live. Seed bears according to its kind. Like her mother, Lady Constance of York had taken early in her youth to evil ways. While yet a girl, she had lost her honour; having fallen into a guilty passion for her cousin, the earl of Kent, and gone to live with him at his house in open shame. Tiring of Kent, she had married a man beneath her rank; a man whom nearly all the members of her family despised and spurned; first, because he stood too low for mating with a princess of the blood, and next, because he bore a tainted name, unpopular in the city, and suspected by the court.

This husband of Lady Constance was Thomas Despencer, fourth in descent from that Hugh Despencer who had been created earl of Winchester by Edward of Carnarvon, and hung by order of Edward of Carnarvon's outraged queen. In the opinion of her family, Lady Constance had flung herself away; but Lord Despencer, using his position as a son-in-law of the duke of York, had

stepped into Richard's ante-room and cabinet. There, under guidance of his partner, he had served King Richard, much as his ancestor had served King Edward: not in his public business as a councillor, but as the secretary of his vices, and the instrument of his evil thoughts.

Bearing sons to her lord, who might succeed to any titles he acquired, Lady Constance had pushed his fortunes on the lines most likely to attain her ends. Desiring to be made a countess, she had gone the right way, and her efforts had been crowned by great success. By taking part in the plot for murdering her uncle Gloucester, she and her spouse had won a capital share of spoil. The attainders of Despencer's family had been annulled. Still dearer to the heart of Lady Constance, had been her husband's creation as earl of Gloucester; one of King Richard's acts of malice towards his aunt, the widowed duchess, towards his cousin, Lord Humphrey, and towards the two orphan girls, Lady Anne and Lady Joan. Gloucester was their family title. Humphrey bore that title at the moment, when the miserable hanger-on at court had been created earl. But Lady Constance, thinking of no one but herself, her

husband, and her son, had joyously exchanged her odious name of Despencer for the proud and semi-royal style of countess of Gloucester. Yet her days of gladness had been brief. Grasping at too many things, her husband had lost them all. By joining in the war against Bolingbroke, he had forfeited his coronet, and then, in trying to regain his coronet, by the New Year's plot, he had forfeited his life.

For five years Lady Constance had been a widow, with a troop of boys and girls, and hardly any place that she could call her own. Once more, the curse of treason had descended on her husband's roof. She had no right to call herself either countess of Gloucester or Lady Despencer. The nobility of her husband's family was gone. Her son, Richard Despencer, received no summons to the House of Lords. She had to fall back on her maiden rank, as Lady Constance of York. Time brought no solace to her widowed heart. Other offenders were finding advocates, but her little ones found no friend. In spite of all his villanies, her brother Rutland had been suffered to succeed her father as duke of York. Yet Rutland had been deeper in the New Year's plot than her

husband. Why was one man spared and not the rest?

Though hating the new dynasty, by which her prospects had been blighted, Lady Constance loathed her brother Edward far more earnestly than she hated Bolingbroke and his sons. Henry was a foe; an open, even a noble foe; whose actions she could calmly weigh and fairly judge. The duke, her brother, was a base and shifty wretch, false to all men and women save himself. Even his domestic virtues were assigned to causes which provoked a smile. She laid her miseries at that brother's threshold. He had led her husband into plots, and then betrayed his doings to the king. But for her brother's treachery on the Night of the Kings, Despencer might have been alive, and Richard, her affectionate cousin, seated on his throne. If so, her husband might have been a duke.

By all that followed on her husband's death, Lady Constance had been deeply hurt. At Bristol, where Despencer fell, a victim to the crowd, her brother might have taken up his corpse and buried him with decent rites. What had he done to soften and allay a sister's grief? A stony-hearted

villain, who imagined that he owed the king a turn, and might repay him by exposure of his enemy, he had driven a pole-point through Despencer's skull, hoisted the head aloft, and carried it from shire to shire in a derisive show, with trumpeters in his front, and choristers in his wake. Blaring and shouting as he marched along, her brother had entered London with that ghastly head exposed on a lance-point: a brother-in-law's head, not taken by himself in fight, but huckstered from a mob to make that miserable and disgusting show!

No lapse of time had driven that brother's 'triumph' from the widow's mind.

And now, with stealthy foot, and key in hand, Constance was tempting fortune on her own account. If all went right, her kingdom would be made. If not, she could involve her brother in the treachery and disgrace of her attempt. She knew that he was plotting as of old, with murder in his thoughts. Within the last seven weeks, he had broken into the garden at Eltham, with intent to kill the king and the king's sons. She knew these facts. Her brother's liberty—if not his life—was in her hands.

In spite of the great day at Shrewsbury, clouds appeared to Lady Constance to be setting round the throne. Glendower seemed making head against the Prince of Wales. Northumberland, fretted by his son Hotspur's fall, was up in arms against the king. Scrope, archbishop of York, brother of the man who had been hacked to death at Bristol, was not only denouncing the usurper from his pulpit, but putting on his coat of mail. Thomas de Mowbray, having been dismissed from Windsor, was prepared to raise his banner and avenge his wrongs. Those wrongs were numerous; including his father's death. The risers seemed to want for nothing but a visible head. Northumberland was said to have given the king his crown; and Lady Constance fancied that the border chief could take away that crown. A new king was required; in that exchange of rulers Lady Constance found she had a part to play.

As night came on, she stole from the shadows of the keep towards the privy lodgings, where her keys came into use. Familiar from her cradle with the royal house, she knew which passages to take; which doors were open, which were locked; which rooms were tenanted and which

were bare. Here lay the queen's chambers, there the damozels' chambers. At the foot of the Norman keep stood the Norman tower.

Using her master-keys, she passed from door to door, from stair to stair, until she reached a door in that Norman tower. She turned the lock, and stood in presence of two little boys.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NORMAN TOWER.

1405.

THE little boys now tenanting the Norman tower were Edmund de Mortimer, earl of March, and his brother, Lord Roger de Mortimer, only sons of that Roger, earl of March, heir presumptive to King Richard, who had fled from Pleshy to avoid his bounden duty, and had perished miserably in his Irish camp.

On Richard's deposition, Edmund had become the lawful king. But he was then a child, and nearly all his friends were in the beaten camp. Parliament had set his claim aside. 'A man shall reign over my people,' was a call from heaven, to which the primate Arundel had given a voice. The crowd had cried Amen. 'A man shall reign;' and by a 'man' they meant the popular and crusading prince.

If Edmund de Mortimer, then a child, had been rejected as unfit to govern on account of youth, his uncle, Sir Edmund of Wigmore, was mature in years; but no one had the courage to oppose the public idol, and Sir Edmund, slipping out of sight, had buried his pretensions in the Wigmore woods.

This prince (mistaken by Shakespeare for his nephew Edmund) was a cunning man. By birth and by connexion, he lay open to suspicion on the part of Bolingbroke. His nephew was the legal heir; his sister, Lady Elizabeth de Mortimer, was Hotspur's wife. Yet, by his policy, he disarmed the new king's vigilance. Arrayed in homely garb, and uttering homely saws, he passed for a bumpkin, slow of wit, and even weak of mind. The man was sharp enough. When told that Henry of Bolingbroke called himself the 'heir,' he muttered, 'Yea, he is so, as a pirate is the heir of a merchant, whom he has taken and destroyed.' Sir Edmund had no wish to share his nephews' lodgings in the Norman tower. Yet he had never missed a chance of drawing his sword in that nephew's cause. Fighting at Shrewsbury, he had narrowly escaped with life. He had accepted an alliance with Glendower and taken a lairdship from

the king of Scots. Sir Edmund had, in fact, gone over to the enemy of his country; marrying a daughter of Glendower, and taking service with that mountain prince. All enemies of the house of Lancaster were Sir Edmund's friends.

The two boys knew their midnight visitor. Lady Constance was their friend, their mother's cousin, and an ally of their name and cause. She told them she had come to carry them away into the western shires, where they would find their mother and their uncle, with a host of men who were in arms to do them right. Glendower, she announced, was fighting in their name. Their uncle, Sir Edmund, was the leading person in his council and his camp. But they had English friends no less than Welsh. Once they got free from Windsor forest, thousands of men, she said, would spring to arms and rally to their flag. All Wales was up. The Percies were again astir; their widowed aunt, Lady Elizabeth, being more and more incensed against the king since her husband, Hotspur, fell.

The boys were willing to escape, and Lady Constance led them from the Norman tower. Descending the stairs, they came into the open ward, and under cover of the darkness, crept by

the door of King John's tower to the south port, close by the opening now called St. George's gate, and stole away into the park.

At dawn, a cry was raised in the deserted rooms. The princes were not in their beds! Missed by their attendants, they were sought for, high and low, among the wards and courts, and in and out of the adjacent passages and rooms. From wall to chapel, every corner of the pile was whipt. No boys were found. Failing to trace them in the Castle, messengers ran into the town. Had any strangers been observed about? Suspicion fell on Lady Mortimer, their mother. Elinor, Lady Mortimer, was not only mother of the legal heir, but was of kin, by either blood or marriage, to the leading rebels who had lately fallen by the sword and axe. A sister of Kent, a sister-in-law of Salisbury, a sister-in-law of Hotspur, and a niece of Huntingdon, how could Lady Mortimer escape suspicion, when her sons had been snatched away in the darkness of a winter night? But Lady Mortimer had not been seen in Windsor. She was living in the western shires, among the Welsh supporters of her son, and near a lover of her own, to whom—a true descendant of Joan the Fair—she was supposed to be kinder than the

Church allowed. No one likely to be concerned in such a raid as that on the Norman tower had been in Windsor, save the Lady Constance of York, widow of the executed traitor Lord Despencer.

Where was Lady Constance? Gone. When—whither? Gone in the night: gone through the forest; with her horses heading towards the west.

The family seat of the Despencers stood at Cardiff Castle, on the river Luff, a long mile only from the Severn. Cardiff lay in the Mortimer country, in the rear of which lay the districts ravaged by Glendower. If Lady Constance had stolen the boys, she was likely to have carried them to their mother, to their uncle, to the mountains, where a foreign army was engaged in their behalf.

Pursuit began. Crashing through the underwoods, sweeping round the bye-lanes, winnowing every holt and heath, the royal officers hung on Lady Constance's trail, till she and the two princes were hunted down in the Chiltern woods. The lady and the boys were carried back to Windsor, captives of the law.

Examined by the council, Lady Constance opened her heart on other points besides those of

her breaking at midnight into Windsor Castle and carrying off the legal heir.

The duke of York, her brother, she declared, had started a conspiracy to kill the king, and set up Edmund de Mortimer in his place. Seven weeks since, she alleged, her brother had broken into the palace at Eltham, with intent to murder the king in bed. The night being dark, the duke had failed. After that failure, he had turned to her and sought her help. They wanted Mortimer in the camp. Mortimer was in the Norman tower —a place from which he must be got by craft, and not by force. A bunch of keys, in an adroit and steady hand, might reach their door. A cunning Windsor smith, who knew the locks, was ready to produce for them a set of master-keys. These things, she swore, were the contrivance, not of herself, but of her brother York.

That Windsor smith was fetched, and, as a foretaste of the punishment awaiting him, his right arm was laid on a block, and the hand, so skilful in perverting keys, was severed from his body with a butcher's knife.

When put on his defence, the duke of York denied all knowledge of the plot; he being, according to his own report, as innocent of breaking

into Eltham as he was of any guilty knowledge of his sister's recent adventure in the Norman tower.

In face of his denials, Lady Constance put her cause on 'the appeal of death.' She mentioned Thomas de Mowbray, son of the late duke, as an accomplice in her brother's schemes. This shaft struck home. Since his dismissal from attendance on the Little Queen at Windsor, Mowbray had been living in discontent; robbed, as he thought, of rank and property by the king, and ready to conspire with any one for his overthrow. On Lady Constance's confession, Mowbray was arrested. He denied the charge, but Lady Constance held on steadily to her appeal. If any knight or squire would fight for her, according to the custom in the marshal's court, she stood prepared to face her trial. God, she affirmed, would certify the truth of what she said against her brother and the discontented page. Her champion worsted in the combat, she was ready for the stake —ready to be burnt to death.

Henry, though in other days he had offered to fight the young man's father, had no faith in the old theory that Heaven would not allow the innocent to fail. York stood on his denial; but

the council, though they knew his sister to be false and wicked, placed him in restraint. Mowbray, a young man hardly out of his teens, was left at large, and his offence, if any, overlooked; but he was hardly pardoned on the charges made by Lady Constance, ere he vexed the king by quarrelling with the earl of Warwick on the score of precedence. Mowbray was in the wrong. Warwick, an earl, in full possession of his right as peer, stood next to Arundel. Mowbray, who had lost his family peerage, claimed his place at court as earl-marshal. Henry decided for the earl of Warwick, on which the lad, beside himself with passion, entered on a course of opposition to the king, which seemed to justify all that Constance of York alleged.

Producing her champion, Lady Constance showed her willingness to live or die on the truth of her confession. Maidstone, this champion, offered in her name to fight the duke of York. Henry interposed. The case, he said, was judged; the duke committed, during pleasure, to Pevensey. But Lady Constance urged her right to give the challenge. By the statute of Gloucester, passed in the reign of Edward the Third, a widow had the right to put an accused person on a second

trial, even though he had been acquitted by a public court. Maidstone was of gentle birth; his glove could hardly be refused. At length, the duke of York, smarting under a sense of shame, accepted; but the king, for reasons of his own, forbade the combat. Maidstone pressed his suit, on which he was committed to the Tower, and all his chattels forfeited to the king.

At Pevensey, in the Sussex swamps and sands—a dismal and unwholesome keep—the restless duke of York, a prisoner of his sister's malice, almost pined to death.

The cunning smith was tried, condemned, and hung, as a confederate of Lady Constance; while the legal heir, Edmund de Mortimer, earl of March, and his little brother, Roger de Mortimer, returned, but under stricter watch, to their apartments in the Norman tower.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LEGAL HEIR.

1405-8.

Worse might have happened to the two young princes than what came to them in being brought back, a little frightened and fatigued, to their apartments in the Norman tower.

Happily for these boys, Harry of Monmouth had begun to look with pity on their youth, innocence, and helplessness. At one time, Harry of Monmouth had himself been very much like Edmund de Mortimer, earl of March; a beautiful and gentle boy, loving his psalter and guitar much better than he loved his sword and mail. For him those delicate days were passed. At eighteen, Harry of Monmouth was a councillor at the table, and a general in the field. In spite of Queen Juana's malice Sir Harry had become once more the darling of his father's eye.

Fronting Glendower, who was expecting Mortimer in his camp as the signal for a general rising, Henry of Monmouth snatched a moment from his pressing military duties to implore the king his father to allow the two little princes, then at Windsor Castle, to become his personal wards. He gave his word for them ; saying they should not again evade their keepers and disturb the peace. Trusting and brave himself, he pledged his word for the two princes, confident that trust begets trust, that loyalty and truth respond to loyalty and truth. And he was right. The king his father judged him well, and in the teeth of prudent councillors granted his desire. The boys became Prince Harry's wards, and from that moment were as true to him as he was true to them. Edmund, the legal heir, considered himself henceforward as the captive of his cousin's love.

But Harry of Monmouth was away from Windsor Castle ; busy in his western camp, holding the mountaineers in check. He could not undertake the duties of a guardian. Till the border war was over, Henry and his council had to guard the princes in his stead.

Many a daring eye was strained to their apartments in the Norman tower ; for every malcontent

in England fancied that affairs would mend for him when Edmund de Mortimer got his own. Some shrewder Lady Constance might succeed in getting him away. Her raid had come within a bowshot of success, and many a desperate man was ready to repeat her risk. To guard the boys from such game spirits, the council passed an order that 'Edmund, earl of March, and his brother, Lord Roger de Mortimer, should remain in honourable custody near the king's person, even in his time of war, save only when his majesty approached the Welsh borders, on which occasion they were to be left behind in a strong fortress, under a sufficient watch and guard.' This order being sealed, the princes were removed from the Norman tower into the royal house.

Unable to clear himself from his sister's charge, the duke of York was left in Pevensey, and his house and lands were taken by the crown. Appearances were much against him. Many of his former colleagues were suspected of intrigue, and some of them were actually in the field. Archbishop Scrope, and Percy, earl of Northumberland, were in arms against the king. Mowbray, stealing away from London, joined these rebels in the north.

Henry unfurled his banner and prepared to march, carrying the two young Mortimers in his train. Ere he set forth, glad news came in from the Welsh border, where his son, with a mere troop of men, had beaten Prince Griffith, son of Glendower—an Agincourt on a smaller scale. This fight had taken place at Grosmont. 'Victory,' wrote the young and pious hero to the king, 'is not in multitudes of men, but in the power of God.'

This staid and pious conqueror was seventeen years and seven months old.

Cheered by these tidings from his gallant son, the king advanced into the north, but his affairs were settled ere he reached his Yorkshire capital. Nevill, by an artifice, entrapped both the young earl-marshal and the mature archbishop. Northumberland, hearing of his colleagues having fallen into the king's power, fled over the border to his friend the king of Scots. Mowbray was beheaded. Scrope, a man in holy orders, was beyond the reach, as he imagined, of the secular arm; but Bolingbroke, pilgrim and crusader though he had been, was a man to stand no nonsense. Taken in arms, the primate was condemned and put to death like any other rebel. When the priests and friars

got up a cry against the lay tribunal which had sent a prelate to the block, Henry replied to them that the archbishop had been tried, not for matters of doctrine and discipline, but for levying war against his crown. Aware that voices would be raised in Rome against such even-handed justice, Henry packed up the archbishop's casque and mail in a box, and sent them over to the Pope in Italy, with this inquiry:

'These have we found; judge whether he be thy son or not.'

The rebels being crushed, the court returned to Windsor Castle, and the two young Mortimers to their lodging in the royal house. Here they continued to reside in wardship to the Prince of Wales, having their teachers and professors, their hunts and holidays, their exercises in arts and arms, like other princes of the blood.

The duke of York, who wrote verses like a troubadour, sent from his prison at Pevensey a sonnet to Queen Juana, praying her majesty's good offices in his behalf:

If ye but wist my life, and knew
Of all the pains that I y-feel,
I wis ye would upon me rue,
Although your heart were made of steel.

And though ye be of high renown,
Let mercy rule your heart so free.
Turn you, ladie; this is my boon,
To grant me grace in some degree.

The duchess of York, his wife, petitioned Henry and the council in her husband's favour; representing him as the victim of a false charge —as broken in bodily health—and as a loyal subject of the crown. The country being restored to peace, the king and council listened to these prayers. Seventeen weeks of close imprisonment had told on York. Henceforward, he was likely to be a pliant, if not a loyal peer. What need to crush a man whose restlessness of spirit led him into plots which his lack of courage caused him to betray? Craftily treated by the crown, no man could be of greater use than the penitent duke of York.

The king and the king's dynasty were now defined. Henry of Bolingbroke was head of the house of Lancaster. Next after him came Henry, Prince of Wales. Richard, when dissembling and deceiving every one, had placed the king's half-brothers in the order of succession to the crown. Henry had never liked that act of power, and now that he was king he limited with his own royal

hand the patent under which the Beauforts had been purified in blood, by the insertion of these four words:

'Except the royal dignity.'

By act of parliament the crown was vested in the king and in his sons; no notice being taken of either the Beaufort claim or of the Mortimer claim. All other rights than those of Bolingbroke and his sons were left to be decided by the nation when the need arose.

Lord Roger de Mortimer died, leaving his brother Edmund, the legal heir, alone in the royal house. Lady Mortimer, his mother, had already entered into other ties. Sir Edmund de Mortimer, his uncle, had become by marriage a member of Glendower's family. Few of his father's kin were left alive. Edward, earl of Kent, the last of his cousins on his mother's side, dropt off at the age of twenty-four, when all the honours of his mother's family became extinct. Of all his great kinsfolk, only his two sisters, Lady Anne and Lady Elinor, were left.

Alone at Windsor Castle, with no friend save the prince, no hope except his youth, this heir of the Plantagenets amused his captive hours by falling into desperate love.

The girl on whose blonde face the eyes of Edmund de Mortimer fell was Lady Anne Stafford. Like himself, this damsel sprang from a luckless branch of the royal stock; her mother being that Lady Anne Plantagenet, who, on the murder of her father, the duke of Gloucester, had been brought from Pleshy to Windsor Castle, and confined, in what was called 'honourable custody,' near the Little Queen. Here, twenty years ago, in the royal house, her mother had been wooed by Edmund, fifth earl of Stafford, just as she herself was now being wooed by Edmund, fifth earl of March. The gallant Stafford, fighting in the king's cause, had fallen at Shrewsbury; leaving a son, Lord Humphrey, and a daughter, Lady Anne, to his majesty's royal care. Humphrey was lodging with his tutors; Lady Anne was with the queen—a favourite and favoured damsel, till she fell in love with the one man at court, for whom a prudent council, looking to the future peace of England, had decreed a bachelor's life.

Had Edmund de Mortimer been born of a younger branch, he would have been as free to love where he liked, and marry when he pleased, as any other English peer. Unhappily for Lady Anne, Edmund de Mortimer was the legal heir.

Men who are wise are wise in time. The wisdom of the king's council was to lop that elder branch. The king endorsed their prudence. Henry of Bolingbroke might hold his own, and Harry of Monmouth might hold his own; but who could answer that their sons would always be as strong as these great soldiers? Peace in all future time depended on that legal heir departing without issue. So the line laid out for Edmund de Mortimer by a prudent council was that he should live and die a bachelor. When he gave his heart to Lady Anne Stafford, no one at the royal court dared listen to his suit. In vain he pleaded that he had no dream of setting up pretensions to the throne. He readily renounced his claims. As peer of the realm, he was content to serve the king and prince. He only wanted what all other men enjoyed; the freedom to be near the woman who had won his heart. But all his pleas were set aside. A prudent council dared not tamper with the public peace. Of his sincerity, they raised no doubt. The prince might promise for himself, and might be trusted to redeem his pledge. But who could answer for his partisans? Lady Anne Stafford was herself of royal blood. Suppose they

had a son! In spite of every pledge, that son would be the legal heir.

Edmund de Mortimer's one defect of nature lay in the splendour of his birth, and that defect of nature nothing could efface.

When rumours of Edmund de Mortimer making love to Lady Anne Stafford in the royal house oozed out, the councillors then at Windsor had to meet at once. Such evils as they feared required a drastic remedy. For once, the prelates and the barons were agreed. This courtship in the Castle must be stopped. The lover and his mistress must be separated, and their future intercourse forbidden by the state. No further danger must be run.

Dismissed from the queen's service, Lady Anne Stafford was removed from court. Edmund de Mortimer, no longer trusted as of yore, was taken from his lodgings in the royal house to his old apartments in the Norman tower.

In their dismay, the lover and his mistress turned their eyes towards Edmund's guardian, Henry, prince of Wales, though Harry of Monmouth had once more become a stranger to his father's court.

CHAPTER XX.

PRINCE HAL.

1408–12.

When Henry, prince of Wales, returned to Windsor from his long apprenticeship to war on the western border, he was twenty-one years old; a tall man, looking all his years; a sunburnt man, with hair about his head like raven plumes; a face of oblong shape, brow arched and domed, complexion tawny red; teeth white and large; eyes lion-hazel, mild when quiet, but of flashing fire when roused. Yet on this martial face a tender glamour seemed to rest. The young man seemed an image of St. George; one capable of fighting like a god; also of feeling pity like a god.

A few months after his return from those Welsh campaigns, this man of men became a haunter of taverns, a comrade of Poins and Jack, a customer of Dame Quickly, and a patron of Doll. The pupil

of Shrewsbury, the hero of Grosmont, sank into Hal. How came this change about? What influence drove this prince from his father's palaces of Windsor and Westminster to the taverns of Eastcheap?

Juana of Navarre. Doña Juana filled her palaces with a crowd of charlatans, confessors, necromancers, bravos, fools, and dwarfs—the usual tag-rag of a foreign court, especially of courts like those of Brittany and Navarre. This tag-rag looked the more offensive in English eyes from their filthy habits and unkempt attire. Had Henry of Monmouth found a welcome in such palaces, he would have gone by preference to a country fair. But he was never welcome in Juana's house.

A separate home was kept for him in Cole Harbour, his mother's house. Cole Harbour, looking over London bridge, was but a step from Eastcheap. The ward men were Lancastrians to a man. They boasted of having made his father king, and many of them had been his own companions in the camp. He liked them; they adored him in return. To be at court was irksome; for between the queen and him lay openings never to be bridged, and passions never to be cooled. On the river and in Thames Street he was free.

A young man, crossed in love, and mocked by princes whom he could not smite—driven like an exile from his father's house—what marvel that he sought relief in humorous frolic—in the pastimes of his rank and file, men who had been with him a-field, and who would follow him to the death? He had a nimble wit; he loved the airy jest, the merry banter, and the practical joking of a tap-room and a city fair. His chums were soldiers, and in times of peace the fighting qualities of men were things for him to learn by test and proof. He studied men as Madcap Hal.

In this wild season of his life, Edmund de Mortimer and Lady Anne Stafford appealed to Hal. What could he do? The councillors' prudence seemed to him the fear of dotage. What had he to dread from Mortimer? Mortimer at the age of twenty was still a child. Why not permit the lad to fall in love and marry the girl he liked? Harry had been in love himself and understood the misery of a thwarted suit.

Softening to the lovers, he implored the king his father to deal more kindly with the prince, whom he regarded as still his ward, and whose only crime was in his royal birth.

Unluckily for Mortimer and Lady Anne, these

prayers were put up out of season. Whether dated from the prince's chambers in Cole Harbour, or from the guest-room in Dame Quickly's tavern, they were equally unwelcome at the council. Like his sober councillors, the king perceived a hundred reasons for prohibiting a match between Edmund de Mortimer and Lady Anne.

Lady Anne Stafford represented the whole house of Gloucester, just as Edmund de Mortimer represented the whole house of Clarence. To contend against the line of Clarence was enough for the whole house of Lancaster. If Lady Anne and Mortimer were mated, nearly all the royal princes and their families would be on their side, and might be in their camp. And then, suppose they had a son! A race of legal heirs was not to be endured. So long as any legal heir remained, the king in fact would not be king in right. All enemies would denounce him as an intruder on the throne. No true and final recognition of his sovereignty could be got from foreign courts. Look at him now. In spite of victory in the field and popularity in the towns, no court in Europe treated him as the lawful king. No court in Europe would accept the alliance of his son. The French still called him Henry of Lancaster, not Henry, king of

England. Great as he was in war and fame, the king could only bite his lip and wait his turn. If Mortimer were gone, he would be recognised by every one as king; not merely as the king in fact, but as the king in right. The only comforts were, that Mortimer could not live for ever,—and the king was blessed with several sons. Edmund de Mortimer in love with Lady Anne Stafford, threatened the government with a race of legal heirs, in lasting conflict with a race of reigning kings. No prudent prince could suffer such a match.

Hal was rebuffed, rebuked. What more could he attempt for his romantic ward? No councillor would listen to his pleading for a love-match that disturbed the public peace. The king was deaf. Who else could help him in his need? There was the queen. Juana had some influence in the cabinet. Could she be won to favour Mortimer's cause? Not for his sake, Hal was sure; not for Mortimer's, he was also sure. But for her own? Hal knew the queen. Juana wanted money; she always wanted money. Could he buy her countenance? Could he even buy her silence? As a test of her corruption, Hal sent a trusty agent to her closet with an offer. Would she help him

with a word at court? He asked for little, and he promised much. If she would help him, either by her speech or by her silence, to make those lovers happy, he proposed to pay the queen her price.

This agent found Juana open to a bribe. How much? Two hundred pounds. For that two hundred pounds she promised her support; but Hal was out of funds just then; and men like Poins and Nym, though better than the riff-raff in Juana's house, were poor securities for a debt. But here the queen was easy. Though she hated Hal, she was prepared to take his word. No one saw clearer than Juana, that in no long time the crown and kingdom would be Hal's; that the exchequer and the customs would be Hal's; so, on his promise of paying her two hundred pounds in money —paid to her when he was king—she undertook to help that simpleton in the Norman tower.

How far she either spoke or held her tongue, no man can say. She failed; but Hal was satisfied with her. He kept the secret of her bargain to himself; so that the king, her husband, never learned that his partner was the hired and sordid agent of his son.

Juana failed as Hal had failed. To neither

wife nor son could Henry lend his ear. A cautious sovereign, looking his future in the face, and thinking of the ruin that accompanies civil strife,—what were the sighs of a silly boy and sentimental girl to him? His first consideration was the realm. A match of Mortimer with Lady Anne was certain to disturb, and all but certain to destroy, the public peace Juana's wiles were lost on him. A thing imprudent in itself was not the less imprudent for a woman wishing it to be done.

The lovers had to wait till Madcap Hal was king.

They had not long to wait; nor were they doubtful of his will to serve them when he had the power.

No English prince had ever come to reign with such immense and sovereign acclamation as Hal—good evidence that the peers and people understood their madcap prince. The first act of his peers and commons was to tender him an address, in which they offered to swear allegiance to him before he had sworn to rule according to the laws. No prince had ever called forth such a vote. Harry of Monmouth, hero of Eastcheap, was regarded by his people as the living law.

'I shall begin my reign,' he said, 'by pardon-

ing every one who has offended me, and by designing to promote my people's happiness. I will be crowned on no other condition than that of using my authority to promote the public good.'

Hal prayed to God, that, if He foresaw that he would prove other than a just and good king, He would take him from the world at once, rather than seat him on a throne to be a calamity to his people.

Orders were given at once to liberate Edmund de Mortimer from his durance in the Norman tower, and summon him to take his seat among the peers. Yet, prudent even in his generous act, the young king seated his ward in parliament as a peer, not as a prince.

This question of Mortimer's seat was edged with many thorns. If birthright ruled, the earl of March's place was on the throne; if statutes ruled, his place was next after the king's brothers. But to seat Edmund de Mortimer next to lord Humphrey of Lancaster, was to recognise his claims as a pretender to the throne; a rivalry which neither nation, council, nor dynasty were yet prepared to recognise. Hal called him to his seat as Edmund, fifth earl of March; not as Edmund, first prince of the blood. Instead of sit-

ting above the duke of York, Mortimer took his seat next after the earl of Arundel.

When Edmund's royalties were sunk, his manhood came in sight. No longer treated as pretender to the throne, his right to woo and marry as he pleased would scarcely be denied. Hal promised him, 'by word of mouth,' that he should be left free to marry when and where he chose. To stop all cause of cavil, Henry procured an act of parliament confirming this 'word of mouth.'

Thus, thanks to Madcap Hal, Edmund, earl of March, and Lady Anne Stafford became man and wife. They were a happy and retiring pair, who, for a long time, found the sweetness of their life in love. No issue came to them; and though they kept their place at court, men ceased to think of them as claimants of the throne.

Juana, now queen-dowager, though she had failed in helping them, demanded payment of her bribe. Hal, short of money, sent her a privy seal for one hundred pounds on account, 'in part payment,' as he noted, 'of a greater sum due to the said queen on a private agreement made between the said queen and our present lord the king, concerning the marriage of the earl of March, *purchased* and obtained of the said lady, the queen, by our

said lord, now the king, when he was Prince of Wales.'

Hal must have felt a keen delight in telling such a woman, in the plainest words, that he had 'purchased' her good will, in a matter of human sympathy, for a large sum of money. In a little while, a second hundred pounds was paid to her on the same account by privy seal. When all was paid, the young king and the sorceress queen were quits.

One of Hal's earliest acts as king was the erection of a monument to his mother. Lady Mary had been laid in Leicester, which belonged to her of right. Bolingbroke's tomb had been prepared in Canterbury, near the grave of Edward the Black Prince. But Lady Mary lay apart, and in her own domain; above her ashes rose the noble effigy of her son.

Madcap Hal was rising into Henry the Fifth.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEVIL'S TOWER.

1413.

AUGUST the third, a day of special sanctity in the eyes of northern men—being the festival of St. Walthen—a fair Scotch lad, with dreamy and poetic face, was brought to Windsor, where a lodging had been made for him, under the king's own orders, in that corner tower, where the wicked earl-marshal used to lodge. This place, the oldest part of Beauclerc's house still standing, was already known as the Devil's tower.

The pile consisted of two parts, a semi-circle and a square, with upper and lower rooms in each, and vaults sunk deep in the foundations of the rock. Into the basement of that work descended a flight of steps from the Norman keep. Crossing fire with King John's tower, this outwork covered the approaches from the eastern side. The

windows gave on the upper ward, on the Norman keep, and on the outer fosse. Planted as a garden, this outer fosse was used by the queen's maidens for a promenade; hence the adjoining tower, in which the young man came to lodge, was called the Maidens' tower, as well as the Devil's tower. Pages said, laughing, it was all the same. The scarp, descending from the keep, was covered from parapet to ditch with vines and flowers. The grim old keep, in which Robert de Mowbray had been left to rot, had taken up the name of Rose —la Tour de Rose. Windsor was putting on her legendary dress.

Treated by the Constable, Sir John Stanley, as a guest, and not a prisoner, that fair Scotch boy was led into the state apartments of the Devil's tower; a series of adjoining rooms— hall, dining-room, and dormitory—with offices for page and valet; apartments which were then, as they are now, assigned to the sovereign's princely guests.

James Stuart, king of Scots, was a personage of more exalted rank and more unhappy fortune than Edmund de Mortimer, earl of March. A king's son, born in the purple, at the moment of his passing into the Devil's tower he was an

actual and undisputed king. No evil done by him had made him captive to the English crown; for he had neither crossed the border with an army, nor been taken on an enemy's soil. The captive of an accident, perhaps of an intrigue, James had first come to Windsor as a guest; not of his own will truly, yet in all the qualities of a guest. In virtue of those qualities he had been detained at Windsor and in other English strongholds many years.

An angry people, robbed by strangers of their prince, the Scots had long been storming heaven with prayers for his release. But these appeals had neither shot one bolt nor broken down one gate. A wicked regent ruled his kingdom, and the people of that kingdom wept for their lost prince in bitterness of heart. They said the king, corrupted in a foreign school, had no desire to quit his exile. Babylon was sweet. The southern sun was warm, the southern airs were soft. Scholars and knights abounded in that foreign land. Poets and story-tellers, rivals of Petrarch and Boccaccio, were writing fables and sonnets in the English tongue. Why should a young man want to leave that paradise for the heights of Stirling and the swamps of Perth? Men who best knew

the story of James's youth, were slowest to believe in his return, even though he were beckoned into Stirling by the vision of a crown.

No youth had ever lived in a more wretched home than James, the Scottish prince. The king, his father, was a crazy invalid, the last of his poor senses kicked out of him by a falling horse. The duke of Rothsay, his elder brother, was a thief and sot, addicted to the vilest pastimes and the basest company. The earl of Fife, his cousin, and the duke of Albany, his uncle, were two savages. The king, whose name was John, had vexed his brother Albany, whose name was Robert, by assuming that more popular name, and crowning himself as Robert the Third. Albany had contrived to get the king and the king's sons into his power. Under pretext of the king being ill, he had intrigued himself into the regency; but being odious to the people of all classes, he had been deposed as soon as Rothsay grew into his teens. But Albany, seizing the heir by force, had lodged him in Falkland castle, with an order to his minion that the heir-apparent must be slowly starved to death. This order had been steadily carried out. A female in the house had given the prince a little meal; a second female

had fed him from her breast; but these poor women had been found out by the governor in their work of pity, and been instantly put to death. When Rothsay's room was entered, he was found to have gnawed away the fingers of both his hands.

One life, and only one, then stood between the duke of Albany and his brother's crown; that of the murdered Rothsay's younger brother, Prince James, an urchin barely five years old.

To pacify the poor old king, Albany had hung a heap of innocent folk as Rothsay's murderers; but his executions had only served to deepen the conviction of his guilt. King Robert, anxious for his younger son, Prince James, had sent the lad to Wardlaw, bishop of St. Andrews, hoping that the church might offer him a protection not to be obtained from law. But Wardlaw, finding the task too heavy for his strength, had urged the king to send him to the court of France, where he might live in safety till he came of age. The king agreed, but there was England to consider. Bolingbroke was certain to object to a Scottish heir-apparent going to France, and being tainted from childhood into enmity for the English court and race. Storms might drive his vessel to an

English port, and throw the prince into King Henry's power. Wardlaw had a plan for meeting such an accident. The prince must be provided with two sets of letters: one set addressed to Henry, king of England; a second set addressed to Charles, king of France. According to the port at which he landed, one or other of these sets of letters ought to be produced. His governor must be instructed how to act. If he should fall into English hands, the letters of recommendation to Henry would imply that the prince's goal was Windsor, and his hope a welcome at the English court. Should he succeed in reachiug France, his second letter would explain the state of things more truly to King Charles. This clerical subtlety had overreached itself.

Sinclair, earl of Orkney, had carried the prince, then hardly eight years old, on board a vessel, and run her out to sea, meaning to make either a French or Flemish port. Off Flamborough Head an English cruiser had come in sight, and overhauled the ship. Finding what a prize he had on board, the captain sped for home. Writing on this adventure at an after time, the prince explains that 'we were taken by strong hand, whether we would or no.'

At the same date, an accident had also thrown the prince's cousin, the earl of Fife, into English hands.

Restored to the regency, Albany had sent his son Fife across the border with Douglas and other chieftains to the support of Hotspur and Glendower against the English. Fighting at Shrewsbury, Fife had been captured by the English prince. Bolingbroke had just left Windsor for the north; on his return, he had found the two Scotch princes on his hands; James, son of the king, and heir-apparent to the throne; Fife, son and heir of the regent Albany.

Before they came to Windsor Castle, Henry and his councillors had already taken up their line. Since Rothsay's murder, James was heir-apparent. With a crazy invalid on the throne, this infant might, at any hour, become the actual king. Possession of James's person would enable Henry to dictate his terms to Albany, not only as to Scottish action on the border, but to Scottish policy in the court of France.

How should the prince be treated by his English host? More than one council had been held to solve this point. If James were treated as a friend, he must be free to come and go. The

council knew about his double sets of letters, and the strategy by which the English court was to be led and misled. If the prince were free to go, they knew that Orkney would carry him across the sea to France. If, on the other hand, he were treated as a prisoner, both the French and Scottish nations might resent his injuries, and hot-beds of conspiracy might be planted round the throne.

Henry had decided on a middle course. Compelled by policy to detain the child, he had kept him as a guest; affecting to believe the lying letters, and pretending to receive him as a son. To Orkney, he had said the prince was welcome to his court, and should receive the highest training in arts and arms. When Orkney hinted, after James had been some time in England, that the prince ought to learn a little French, Henry had silenced him with a smile:

'My French is quite as good as that of my brother Charles.'

Not seeing that the luck of heaven had fallen on his child, the crazy invalid had shut up his doors and starved himself to death—at least the regent said so, and no man in Stirling dared to haggle at that regent's word. James had been

proclaimed king, and his uncle, Albany, had been installed his regent. Bolingbroke had raised no obstacles. A divided kingdom and disputed crown were favourable to England in the border shires. Henry could count on Albany, for Fife was in his power.

Nottingham, a strong and central town, far from the sea, had been assigned to James, and there, surrounded by a royal guard, the boy had been taught and trained as Harry of Monmouth had been taught and trained. Bolingbroke had resolved to educate his guest, now king of Scots, on a more liberal system than was common in his native land, so that in future, when the king went home to Perth, he would have for neighbour a man of sense, softened by culture, instead of savages like the late King Robert and his brother Albany. At Nottingham castle,

> Where in strait ward and prison strong

James had passed some part of his early youth, he had the best of tutors and professors. Manly sports and pastimes were allowed him, and he had spent his time in fair division between his books and games.

On the day of his accession, Harry of Mon-

mouth had brought the two Scotch princes up to London. In the spirit of his promise to forgive all enemies, he had cleared the jails. Not only was the earl of March, his rival, set at liberty, but his enemies, Douglas, Hamilton, and other Scots, his prisoners of the field, were suffered to go home. Commissioners were received from Perth to treat for the ransom and enlargement of King James, and of his cousin, the earl of Fife. This treaty was a work of time. That James might pass the interval in better air, and the enjoyment of wholesome sport, Henry removed his guest to Windsor Castle, where the Constable Stanley provided him a lodging in the Devil's tower.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE.

1414–15.

In writing afterwards of his detention at the English court, King James divided his times of captivity into 'twice nine years.' His times were very near the truth. Nearly nine years were spent by him, in Nottingham, and nearly nine years more were to be passed in Windsor, ere the teacher and legislator of his country was equipped for his momentous task.

At seventeen, when he came to lodge in the Devil's tower, James was already grounded in the liberal arts. Of course, he had a great deal yet to learn, but he was broken to the work, aware of what he had to do, and eager to extend his studies. From what he heard, and what he recollected, of his native country, he was conscious of the need for sweeping changes. When he left the bishop

of St. Andrews, no great school of learning had a root in Scottish soil. Arts and letters were unknown beyond the gates of priory and palace. Law, as a branch of learning, was no better off than arts and letters. Nothing had yet been done towards bringing the scattered rules and edicts into order, and the elements of a Scottish code were still to seek. Such justice as men got was very properly described as 'wild.' Such freedom as existed was a freedom shared by the clansmen with the otter and the wolf.

A moral sense had still to be awakened in the clans. Religion was a show, and loyalty a jest. The Scottish mind, as a distinct and living element in the world, was still unborn.

Here lay a field of labour worthy of a king, and it was James's glory that he saw his field afar off, and prepared himself to plough and sow it when his time should come.

In spite of his slender frame and dreamy face, the lad seemed strongly knit and bound, fitted to either run or wrestle, either joust or dance. Well trained in sport and exercise of arms, he was a good rider and a better bowman. In his native games—putting the stone and hurling the bar—he beat all comers; an important point for him, when he

should come to deal with savage clans, for whom the physical qualities stood first and last. Few lads could run a spear, or push a buckler, with the king of Scots. Yet James's chief attainments lay in other spheres. In logic, morals, and mathematics, he had made much progress. He was fond of poetry, and read with eager eyes the works of Gower and Chaucer, whom he described as:

> My masters dear,
> Gower and Chaucer, that on the stepis sat
> Of Rhetoric, when they were living here,
> Superlative as poets laureate,
> In morality and eloquence ornate.

Reading these 'masters dear,' the newest lights of English song, the future author of *The King's Quhair* began to feel the craving to express his heart in verse. To wake his lyre, he only needed love.

A bright and noble youth! Eyes lit with fire shone out from underneath a dome of brow, which even at the age of seventeen seemed already pale with thought and sad with care. As he rode up the Castle slope, he looked a prince of boys—a younger brother of his royal host.

That host came down to see his guest, and

make provision for his comfort in the Devil's tower. Seven hundred pounds a-year were paid for ordinary charges, and the young king's bills outran his income fast and far. The earl of Fife lodged near him at Windsor, as he had formerly lodged near him at Nottingham and in the Tower. Fife was a feeble and disordered savage, on whom the sciences and humanities were lost. The king allowed them to hunt in his forest, ride in his tilt-yard, play in his tennis-court; showing no greater fear of leniency towards the Scottish king than he had shown leniency towards the earl of March.

By some of James's followers, and by most of Mortimer's followers, this clemency was read for weakness. Fancying the king a baby, his renown a fiction of the courtiers, they began to whisper and intrigue. French agents were about the court; here, in the disguise of a confessor, there in the habit of a physician, and here again in the person of an astrologer or an alchemist. Money was plentiful. Fearing an invasion of their country, the French were willing to purchase peace through either a rebel's bow or an assassin's blade. A million of nobles was provided, or was said to be provided, by the king of France, for bribes. To any man who rose against the king—so much.

To every man who, short of rising, raised up obstacles to the king—so much. A market for disloyalty was opened under Henry's nose, and in the innermost circle of his court.

That some might be corrupted, it was idle to deny Juana had an interest in preventing that intrusion of an English army into France. Duke Jean, her son, a feudatory of that country, would be forced to take a side. Each party was already calling on him for help, and to resist that call was to defy two mighty powers. In such a war, no man could stand aloof and yet feel safe. Arthur, her second son, was even more unlucky than his brother Jean. Jean was an ally, not a subject, of the English king. Arthur was his subject, and if taken in arms against him, might be put to death as a rebellious peer. Arthur was a subject of two crowns; as heir of Brittany a French peer; as earl of Richmond an English peer. He bore an English title, even in his brother's court. As count of Richmond he was known in the camp of Charles. Holding possessions in both countries he had sworn allegiance both to Charles and Henry; but his greater interest lay in France, and if English force invaded Normandy he would have to fight for Charles. If Henry won, Juana's children would

be lost. Apart, then, from her old dislike of Henry, she had many reasons for diverting that intrusion of an English army into France.

A multitude of agents were employed; some of them friends of James Stuart, some of them friends of Edmund de Mortimer. On the eve of starting for his enterprise, Henry agreed to liberate Fife in exchange for Percy, son of Hotspur, who had taken refuge with the Scottish regent. Every one supposed that Percy would be hung; but instead of punishing Percy as a rebel, the king sent him a full pardon for his past offences, and restored him to his honours and estates. Yet Percy, Fife, and Albany, listened to French emissaries, fingered their French crowns, and entered into the Southampton plot against the king—their objects being as they alleged, to stop the invasion of Normandy, overturn the throne, and free James Stuart from the Devil's tower.

The royal captive had no part in these perfidious and ungrateful schemes.

As soon as Mortimer heard of the intended treason, he repaired to Henry and denounced the plot. At first, the king smiled openly, but when he heard the details and read the proofs, his brows began to lower. Convinced by evidence, he called

a court, produced his witnesses, and swept the Southampton plotters from his path; including two of his most trusted councillors in that righteous act.

One man at least was true. Conquered by his kindness, Edmund de Mortimer proved to him in that hour of trial, that the good seed sometimes falls into a living soil. From the day of that Southampton tragedy, Mortimer held the king, his cousin and his rival, in the fullest trust and in the warmest love.

Albany and Fife were beyond Henry's reach, and not one breath of malice had assailed the king of Scots. Ready to cross the sea, Henry was willing to believe in Albany's innocence; yet a plot, so private and so deadly, warned him that in common prudence he should look more strictly to his captive in the Devil's tower. James might be true and fair; averse to deeds of blood; but still he was a captive; taken at sea against his will; detained at Windsor Castle against his will. A man so caught, so kept, was sure to be an object of intrigue. Wild spirits were abroad, the fanatics of many claimants and of many creeds. The Welsh were rising. London was disturbed by Lollard preachers. Albany was known to be

intriguing with the border chiefs. To such men, princes and pretenders were the blood of life. Mortimer, in the royal camp, was safe. King James, no less a prize, was left at Windsor Castle, in the Devil's tower. Windsor was guarded; but the raid of Lady Constance on the Norman tower had proved that guards might be evaded and a royal captive carried off. Chancellor Beaufort, the king's uncle, was requested to keep his eye on the Devil's tower, and on his guest, the king of Scots.

King James, like all great readers, was an early riser. What his master, Chaucer, said of another person, might have been said of him:

> Up rose the sun, and up rose *he*.

To quote from his chief poem—written in the Devil's tower—his own quaint rhymes:

> The long days, and the nightis eke,
> I would bewail my fortune in this wise;
> For which, against distress comfort to seek,
> My custom was on mornings for to rise
> Early as day. O happy exercise!
> By thee come I to joy out of torments.

One window of his chamber looked into the

upper ward, a second on the garden in the fosse. This window was his musing-place. Here, he could see and hear the things of outward life; the woodmen going to their craft, the abigails flitting in and out, the archers pacing on the Norman keep. James had no part in all this busy life; but he was young in years; his mind was sound and pure; and so, to look on free and busy men —each working out his life, in that which heaven had given to him without his leave—was good for him, and strengthened him to bear his lot. Again, to quote his words:

> Bewailing in my chamber thus alone,
> Dispairing of all joy and remedy,
> For-tirit of my thpught, and woe-begone,
> And to the window 'gan I walk in hye,
> To see the world and folk that went for-bye;
> As, for the time—though I of mirthis food
> Might have no more—to look, it did me good.

In this high spirit, the king of Scots endured his long confinement in the Devil's tower.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ATTEMPT AT RESCUE.

1415.

THE king being gone to Normandy, Windsor was a deserted place. James felt his lonely state, and in the manner of his masters, Gower and Chaucer, he began to set his cares to rhyme.

Though draped and furnished as a study, his chamber was to him a jail. The garden over which he looked was walled. Even in the chase he was surrounded by a troop of spies. A sentinel may be called a guard of honour, but a sentinel who cannot be removed at will, becomes a jailor. Stanley was respectful, Beaufort bland and courteous; but these officers were both observant; for in Henry's absence, their responsibilities were great.

James was still adding tome on tome, and gathering art on art, but exercise of the mind is not enough for man. As the young king grew

older, and the pastimes of the tilt-yard and the tennis-court began to pall on him, he sighed for liberty.

> Whereas in ward, full oft I would bewail,
> . . . Since every wight thereof hath sufficance.

To a man whose will is crushed, whose feet are clogged, the wing of a palace is as much a prison as a dungeon under ground. He peeps out of his window, and sees a man below. That man is free; going as he lists, and whither he lists. Why is that fellow free? Why should one man be caged and not another? What has yon ditcher done, that he should enjoy the greatest gift of heaven? Is it a virtue to be born a carl? Is it an evil to be born a king? If so, why should one man be blessed in being born to that virtue, another man cursed in being born to that evil? James went still deeper in his questionings:

> The kid, the beast, the fish eke in the sea,
> They live in freedom, everich in his kind,
> And I a man, and lacketh liberty!
> What shall I say? What reason shall I find?
> That fortune should do so?

Pausing to argue with his fancies, he found no clue to the interpretation of his dream. The

old, old torments, born of pain and darkness, came to him in the Devil's tower, as they have come to thousands of his kind; torments, the more or less acute according as the nature acted on is sensitive and poetic.

> Then would I say, Giff God me had deviset
> To live my life in thraldom thus and pine,
> What was the cause that He more me compriset
> Than other folk to live in such ruine?

No answer came to the querist in the Devil's tower; for answer to such groaning of the spirit there is none. What good these questionings brought the royal poet, lay in the charm of toying with them, dressing them up in words, and shaping them into rhyme. To mould them as a sculptor moulds his fancies, and to look at them as from a second standpoint, was a soothing balm to James. Such labours are a kind of prayer, and soothe the spirit like a psalm.

Unknown to James, another agent was at work in his behalf; another and mysterious agent, over whom he had no more control than little Edmund de Mortimer had over his visitor in the Norman tower.

Five nights ago, a man named Thomas Payne, coming to Windsor with the utmost secresy, had

found a lodging in the suburbs with a family whose opinions were his own, in whose fidelity he could trust. By day he kept indoors, unseen by people of the town. At dark he crept forth, silently, and sauntered to the Castle hill. The chapel of St. George was open, and the lower ward was free. He hung about the lower ward, the middle gate, the tennis-court, and the fosse. For those five nights he had been marking with a careful eye the pathways, outlets, and surroundings of the Devil's tower.

Payne, this midnight visitor of the Castle, was a daring and ingenious man, who had already won his spurs as prison-breaker, by a wonderful achievement at the Tower. Of Welsh descent, a native of Glamorgan, he had entered into holy orders, but the minds of men were opening to a fresher light; and Payne, in place of sticking to his beads and rosaries, had begun to read and think. Learning had led him into controversy, and in time, the poor Welsh scholar had become a pupil of Wycliffe, and a comrade of his lay-disciples, who were usually denounced as Bible-men. His zeal and service in the cause had won for him the notice of Sir John Oldcastle, the 'good Lord Cobham,' who had taken him into his house,

making him at once his chaplain, clerk, and councillor. He had served his master long and well. When Oldcastle was committed to the Tower, Payne had been one of the brave fellows who had broken into his vault and carried him away by force—an act for which his head was forfeit to the law. In all that master's measures he had borne a part: being with him at Cowling, Smithfield, St. Albans, and in the western marches. Like his master, he appeared to have a charmed life. Like Oldcastle, he had been denounced at every market cross; warrants had been signed for his arrest; a price had been set on his head. A week ago, the Lollards had been roughly handled in St. James's Fields, in the affair called Acton's Rising; but the nimble Welsh priest had got away by Charing Cross unsinged. And here he was at Windsor, lodging under the Castle wall; hiding his face by day, but stealing forth at dusk; intent, for some dark purpose of his own, on mastering the approaches, outlets, and surroundings of that tower in which the king of Scots sat rhyming on the mysteries of life!

But Payne was being watched. By day and night, men keen of sight and quick of scent as bloodhounds, were about his feet; not official men,

bearing the warrants signed for his arrest; but a gang of spies and bravos, who were ready to run all risks, in hope of getting a supreme reward.

One Thomas Haseley, clerk of parliament, was the leader of this gang. Knowing the price of Payne, Haseley had followed on his track from Charing Cross to Windsor. Payne was wanted by the council. Both as prison-breaker and as rebel, he was forfeit to the law; but Haseley was a master in his craft, who waited patiently till the hunt was up. In dogging Payne about the Castle hill, noting his midnight studies, a suspicion dawned on Haseley, that the Lollard chiefs had sent him to Windsor Castle, in the hope that he might break into the Devil's tower, as he had formerly broken into Beauchamp tower, and carry off the king of Scots as he had formerly carried off Sir John Oldcastle. If that were so, and could be proved by evidence, his capture of the fellow at the moment of success, would be a service worth—well, he might say at least a thousand marks.

While Payne was busy with his studies, Haseley and his men lay still and out of sight. They had no warrant to arrest the fugitive; but they were acting on their own account; well knowing that the man who wins is always in the right.

Chancellor Beaufort was no stickler for pedantic rules. Haseley knew the priest; knew that he had broken into the Tower; a crime for which some of his confederates had been hung and drawn. If he were taken in the act of breaking into Windsor, and attempting to remove the king of Scots, his captor might expect a pension and a place. But they must not foreclose too soon. Payne was no ordinary plotter. Till the night of his attempt, when he was ready for his start, he was unlikely to carry on his person any papers that would show his purpose and prove his guilt. Not till he was ready for his daring act, would he be thoroughly equipped for flight. Then, but not till then, his hose and cloak might be unseamed by Haseley's knife with hope of good results.

At length, the Lollard's plans seemed ripe. Six nights he prowled about the middle gate, the tennis-court, and the outlet on the park. Next night he meant to act. Men, horses, routes were all prepared. Nothing was left uncertain by the skilful priest, who had about his person a list of the lodgings to be occupied each night of his journey from the edge of Windsor forest to the passage of the Tweed.

Haseley was on the watch; 'a notable force

of men,' well armed, well drilled, well led, being at his call. As Payne stole forward to the Devil's tower, Haseley sprang on him, followed by his comrades. In an instant Payne was overthrown and bound ; his person and his papers were in Haseley's hands.

Hurried to the chancellor's room, Payne was set before his clerical superior. Beaufort was ill at ease. A bishop wanting to be cardinal, his policy was to stand up for his order, and support the church, even against the king and state. Payne, as a priest, was subject only to the church ; whose rights the chancellor desired to keep intact. But Payne's offence was flagrant, and the king unlikely to forgive a man who had not only broken into his Tower, but who had fallen into his hands in an attempt to liberate his captive from the Devil's tower. Beaufort put off the evil day by ordering Payne to be kept in safety till the king returned from France.

When Henry heard of Payne's arrest, he told his councillors that he was better pleased than if Haseley had given him, or gotten him, ten thousand pounds in money. He was glad to have that prison-breaker in his power.

Yet, screened by Beaufort and the clergy, Payne

was never brought to trial. Passed from jail to jail—from Windsor to Newgate, and from Newgate to the Tower—he waited year by year for his indictment; but the crimes of which he had been guilty were enshrouded in the deepest mystery. His master Oldcastle was betrayed, condemned, and burned; yet Payne, that martyr's chaplain, clerk, and councillor, was never once produced in court. An unseen hand was over him. A silence and a mystery so perfect walled him round, that we only know of his existence in the after-years from one of Haseley's petitions to the king, Henry the Sixth. Late in the reign of the next Henry, the border priest was still in Newgate; still a prisoner of the crown; still waiting for the royal pleasure to be shown.

King James, though not accused of having had a guilty knowledge of Payne's attempt to free him, was more strictly guarded for the future, in the still unviolated Devil's tower.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AGINCOURT.

1415-16.

No king was taken prisoner on the field of Agincourt; for no king save the victor fought in either French or English camp. When all the captives of that battle-field were brought to Windsor Castle, James, king of Scots, remained the man of highest rank lodging as guest and captive on the royal hill.

Charles, king of France—warned by the fall of Jean le Bon, who, taken on the battle-field of Poictiers, had pined and perished in his exile—stood aloof, in his strong places, while the hero of Harfleur stormed along the valleys of the Seine and Somme. As danger neared him, he retired on Rouen, where he stood behind the gates until his young and terrible enemy re-crossed the sea. There he remained, shut in and useless, till his

power was broken in the field. Charles feared to leave his name, like Jean, to one of the Windsor towers. His son, Louis, the dauphin, dangled at his side. This prince, though slack of arm, was free enough in speech. On hearing that Harry of Monmouth was about to cross the sea, he had sent to him, in derision of what he called his 'youth and levity,' a box of tennis-balls. To this impertinence the English king had answered by an order for cutting gun-stones, which he grimly called his tennis-balls for the dauphin. When the king took Harfleur, Louis began to see what sort of youth and levity he had to meet. Madcap Harry was a genuine god of war. Louis, to avoid the shock of battle, rode after his father into Rouen, where he also waited till the rush was met by men more loyal and devoted to their country than himself. This prudence on the part of king and dauphin saved their liberties, and perhaps their lives.

Fight more splendid than that of Agincourt was never fought. Stand more firm and charge more brilliant were never made by English foot and horse. Nor were the French who came into the field unworthy of such foes. Deserted by their king and dauphin, these defenders of their country stood out gallantly to the last, so that the Eng-

lish victory was only gained when the wide plain of Agincourt was littered with the noblest peers and bravest knights in France.

The list of prisoners brought to Windsor Castle by the king, included princes no less famous than the duke of Orleans, the duke of Bourbon, the count of Eu, the count of Vendôme, and the count of Richmond. Others, no less high in rank and fame, were cut down on the field; the duke of Bar, the duke of Brabant; the count of Nevers, brother of the duke of Burgundy; Jean, brother of the duke of Bar. Albret, constable of France, and Dampierre, admiral of France, were slain; all standing to their flags and fighting with a valour worthy of their country and themselves. The great seigneurs of Marle, Grand-Pré, Roussy, and Vaudmont were among the dead. Yet file on file of lords and counts were saved for ransom. Boucicault, marshal of France, was brought to Windsor Castle with the princes. Roye and Harcourt, Houmères and Dommart, Ligne and Noyelle, were but six among the crowd of gallant soldiers who on the great day of Agincourt disarmed Fortune by submitting gracefully to her frowns.

Though Harry of Agincourt was crowned with glory, his revenge was incomplete. Orleans, the

rival who had robbed him of the Little Queen, was now his prisoner; but the rage of battle had deprived him of the joy of bringing home in triumph the rival who had stolen from him his boyish love, Marie of Brittany.

Harry, fighting in a helmet covered by his crown and cognizance, shone over all that field of death. On seeing the action go against his countrymen, the duke of Alençon broke through the English lines, and, smiting to his right and left, was cleaving up a way towards the royal standard, meaning to engage the king in person, when Edward, duke of York, stood out. One swing of Alençon's battle-axe beat him to the earth. Harry, seeing his cousin on the ground, struggling under his weight of armour, stooped to help him up, not noting the assailant's casque. Taking the king at a disadvantage, Alençon whirled his axe, and striking the helmet, cut away some portion of his crown. Springing to his feet, and facing towards his enemy, now revealed to him by his shield and casque, the king laid on with all his might; burning with the joy of meeting this antagonist of his love, this rival of his fame, at last. The French now turned and fled. Alençon found himself alone. A second blow from his battle-axe dinted

Henry's casque, before the French prince, deserted by his men and covered by a ring of steel, threw up his arm, and cried to the astonished combatants :

'I yield. I am Alençon ; and I yield me prisoner to the king.'

Curbing his rage, the king held out his hand to his brave enemy, in sign of taking the prisoner under his protection; but his act of courtesy was unnoticed by the duke of York's retainers, who were maddened by their master's fall. Blows, which nothing could arrest, were crashing on Alençon's mail and shield. He fell, the life bruised out of him, at Henry's feet. Within a pace the French and English princes lay ; Juana's son-in-law by the side of Henry's cousin ; each prince atoning for a life of perfidy by a patriotic death.

Seeing the battle lost, the duke of Orleans sought a soldier's grave. His wife, the Little Queen, was dead ; dying to give her first-born life ; an infant girl as dainty as herself. At twenty-one, Madame Isabel, queen of England and duchess of Orleans, had closed her strange career. The duke, required by policy to take a second wife, had chosen Madame Bonne, a daughter of the Count of Armagnac, a close connexion of Juana. He

was barely out of his second honeymoon, before he mounted horse, and rode into the field of Agincourt. Neither asking nor giving quarter, he fell among a heap of slain; whence, when the battle ended, he was dragged unwillingly into a captive life.

All sense of rivalry between the captor and his captive being past, Henry received his prisoner with the greatest courtesy, praising his gallantry in the field, and offering him consolation in his evil plight. The heat of battle over, Henry affected to regard the contest, not as a trial of skill and courage between two equal combatants, but as a judgment of the higher powers against the evil courses taken by the king and court of France.

The duke of Orleans stayed some time at Windsor Castle, lodging in King John's tower and the adjoining rooms. These chambers were a portion of the royal house, divided only by a stair and hall from the king's bedroom and private cabinet. At joust and table, the French poet met his fellow-poet, James of Scotland; who could now, in actual converse with French princes, judge how far the late king had been joking when he told him that his own French was as good as that of his brother Charles. At other things the Scottish

poet could only guess. Orleans was the knight and scholar of his race. If James had met the dauphin Louis instead of the duke of Orleans, he might have thanked the kindly Fate, unkindly as she looked, which had delivered him into the austere, heroic school of Windsor Castle, instead of dropping him into the lax and turbulent society of the Louvre.

Orleans and Bourbon, Vendôme and Eu, remained at Windsor Castle till the following year, when war broke out with Charles a second time, and Harry of Agincourt put forward his pretensions to the crown of France. Before the king set out again for France, he moved his royal captives from Windsor Castle to more distant strongholds. Orleans was sent to Pontefract, and afterwards to the Tower, where he remained for more than twenty years, his chief employment being the laud of his dead love, La Petite Reine. That dainty lady died to enter on a fairer life. She was a suffering woman; she became a glorified saint. Loved, honoured, sung by Orleans, she put on a bright, imperishable crown. In him she found a laureate who enchanted her to all the world, till, for the world as well as for himself, the Little Queen became—

The fairest thing of mortal sight.

Adieu, adieu, Madame la Petite Reine!

Next after Edward of Windsor, Henry of Agincourt is the greatest personage in connexion with the royal hill. Richard of Bordeaux and Henry of Bolingbroke, living in days of civil strife, had turned the Castle to other uses than the culture of St. George. They wanted fortresses, and the saintly chapel had to give precedence to the Norman keep. In times of civil war the practice of ideal virtues droops and dies. St. George had no concern with civil strife, nor could the partisans of the younger or the elder branch invoke his name. A national saint, his name could only be invoked against the foreign foe. Hence, in these troubled reigns, the worship of St. George had fallen into some neglect. Henry of Agincourt, reviving the heroic days of Edward of Windsor, breathed new life into the knightly order. He revised the statutes and revived the tournaments. In his foreign war, the ringing cry of 'Hey, St. George!' was heard in every storm and every charge. Faith in St. George was the religion of his camp. Henry assumed the cross, and spoke of visiting the Holy Sepulchre and the birthplace of St. George.

In heart, the king was, like his father, a crusader; and in truth he was the latest and the most heroic of that princely class. Down to the moment of his death he never ceased to talk of Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Under Henry of Agincourt, the festival of the Syrian saint was always kept. Windsor Castle became as much as ever the abode and temple of St. George.

CHAPTER XXV.

KAISER SIGISMUND.

1416.

For the festival of St. George next after the day of Agincourt, no less a potentate than Kaiser Sigismund came to Windsor Castle.

Sigismund was king of Hungary, king of Bohemia, king of the Romans, and elector of Brandenburg, as well as Cæsar; an august and terrible figure to the people of his time; and gratefully humourous to readers of a later date, as being the one and only master of language and letters by the grace of God—'Imperator super grammaticam.'

'How, sir priest! Schisma not a feminine noun? I tell you, I am Sigismund, king of the Romans, and above your rules of grammar!'

Sigismund was neither the first nor last Cæsar who defied the laws of syntax, but he was the

first—and last—to say so, in as many and amusing words.

Sword of the earth, arm of the law, co-regent with the pope, this guest at Windsor Castle was a mighty paladin, yet with such comic elements in his greatness as could hardly be lost on a host who had drunk sack in Eastcheap, and bandied his quips with Poins and Jack. Magog of princes, Sigismund was slow of movement, rude of speech, hungry of stomach, and bare of back. The sceptre in his hand was gilt, not gold. The frown on his imperial brow was a theatrical frown. His smiles were hollow, and his majesty was that of a figure-head. No pride of place prevented him from cadging. He had begged his way from Constance to Windsor, eking out his means by pawning a jewel here, and selling a countship there. When he arrived at Windsor Castle, he wanted meat and drink, clothes, lodgings, pocket-money, everything. Yet, in spite of all his poverty and meanness, he demanded from the peers and councillors a respect and service that were never paid to kings. The saints themselves were sacrificed to him. Defying the rules of heaven even as he defied the rules of syntax, he adjourned for several days the festival of St. George.

At Calais, he had been received, not only by the earl of Warwick, captain of the port, and the whole garrison under arms, but by Gilbert, lord Talbot, who has crossed the Channel as a special envoy from the king. At Dover, he had been met by the king's brother, the young duke of Gloucester, with the earl of Salisbury and his men-at-arms. Arrived at Rochester, he had found the Constable of England and other lords. At Dartford, he had been received by the duke of Clarence, attended by the earls of Huntingdon and March. At Blackheath, the mayor, Sir Henry Barton, with the aldermen and citizens, had given him welcome. At Southwark, Henry and his councillors had gone to greet the stranger; and on all these personages Cæsar had smiled and sponged.

The rabble in Cæsar's suite was vast and penniless—sweeping across the country like a swarm of locusts. Every knecht and ritter from his Bohemian uplands asked the Kentish men for food and housing as a right. Henry, knowing these beggars on horseback, more than a thousand of whom followed their hungry Cæsar, had arranged to spare their pride and fill their bellies, by warning his subjects to shoe their horses, supply them with victuals, and otherwise speed their journey,

but not to trouble them with the bill of costs. Fed, lodged, and cheered for nothing, the Bohemian ritters swore that this English island was a paradise of knights.

What was the king to do with such a swarm of guests at Windsor? Windsor Castle was the largest house in Christendom; for as yet the Vatican was unbuilt, and the Alhambra stood beyond the pale. But such a swarm of men as Cæsar brought with him from Constance, needed a township rather than a house. King John's tower and the Devil's tower were full. Henry was compelled to clear the place, even to the extremity of turning out the dean and canons from their lodgings. They were loth to stir—these priests; for their removal might become a precedent. The king explained that their removal was for that time only. 'It is not our mind,' he wrote to them, 'that by colour of the same to put you hereafter to any further change.'

In May the festival of St. George was held, and Sigismund became a knight of the Garter, and as such, he swore himself a liegeman to the king.

What were his purposes in coming to Windsor? Only to eat and drink, to joust and hunt, and get some suits of clothes? Were his designs to raise a loan and to procure a grant?

Sigismund's straits were desperate. He was pawning lands and selling graces in the north and in the south. Within a few months, he had sold the province of Brandenburg for three hundred thousand ducats. For a small sum of money, he had made the truchsess of Waldburg governor of Suabia. Since then he had sold a dukedom to Amadeo, count of Savoy. Later still, he was supposed to have wrung a sum of money from the French, with promises of yet larger sums, should he succeed in getting them a profitable peace at Windsor Castle. If peace with Henry were worth a million nobles to the French before Harfleur fell and Agincourt was lost, how much more was it worth now that so many French princes, admirals, and marshals were at Windsor Castle, Pontefract, and the Tower?

Was money all that Cæsar sought? The wiser sort of councillors thought not. Money, and meat, and lodging, might be welcome; but the emperor was suspected of having higher things in view. A council was at work in Constance, trying to put down schism (whether feminine or neuter), and restore some kind of unity to the church. That council had burnt John Huss. Sigismund's place was there, in the imperial city on the lake.

Why was he gadding up and down the earth, huddling from the Danube to the Rhone, and from the Garonne to the Thames? Those who observed him keenly fancied they could see his plans. In every place he seemed to be asserting some authority, as though he were in fact as well as name, a king of kings. Most men gave way to him, as though he were a god. Base as the motives were, his powers were exercised in public and without dispute. For money he had raised a burgraff on the Baltic into an elector; for money he had raised a count on the Alps into a duke. But, having paid their coin, Elector Frederick and Duke Amadeo, held their purchased rank, and exercised their purchased rights. A signal act of power had been allowed to pass in Brandenburg and Savoy. With a man at Windsor Castle claiming to be king of kings, who, hungry and comic as he seemed, pretended to the same authority in secular matters as a pontiff waged in spiritual matters, who could say what he might ask for next?

The king, indeed, had met him at the threshold of his kingdom with a bar to such assumptions. As Cæsar's boat came near the shore at Dover, Gloucester had drawn his sword, and

striding into the surf, had put this question to his majesty before allowing him to land:

'Are you about to try and exercise any kind of jurisdiction in this realm?'

Not till his question was answered in the negative had Sigismund been allowed to land. Along the road, and in the daily life at Windsor Castle, not an inch of ground was given up by the king to Cæsar. In his own dominions, Henry was lord and king. In walking from the privy lodgings to the chapel he took the upper side, and at the altar during time of mass he kept the higher place. At table he put the emperor on his left hand. In his jousts he made the same devices for the emperor and for himself.

Suspicion dogged the emperor to Windsor Castle. Men who had been forced to feed and house his ritters, were inclined to doubt his honesty. Why should they shoe his horses and feed his followers for nothing? Tales about his greed and cruelty were dispersed by Lollard preachers, and these tales created for him enemies in the London wards. He had given a passport to Huss, and had afterwards consented to his death by fire. Men who had never thought of Huss before, were kindled into fury by the details of his

death; in all of which Sigismund had figured in a mean, disgusting part. Sitting on his throne, Cæsar had ordered a paper cap, inscribed with the word 'Arch-traitor,' to be placed on the martyr's head. Huss had meekly answered the imperial insult by the words: 'Jesus wore His crown of thorns.' Huss had stepped into the fire, and, singing a psalm, had rendered up his soul to God. These deeds had been done by Cæsar's orders. Had this burlesque of a sovereign come to Windsor Castle to inflame the king and council against the dead Wycliffe and the living Oldcastle?

Sigismund's own account of his visit to Windsor Castle was extremely simple. He had come to see his 'cousin Henry,' and to lay a precious relic on the altar of that cousin's patron saint. No one believed him, for his cousinry was spurious, and his present no less spurious. His kinship lay in the fact that he was a brother of Anne of Bohemia. His relic was a pretended 'heart of St. George.'

At length, in spite of all evasion and disguise, his purposes were revealed: he wanted to impose a peace with France, to interdict new Agincourts, and stay his cousin's march on Paris. All these objects were to be attained by Sigismund while

putting on the Garter, and sitting on the king's left hand at meals :—the price of his success at Windsor being already settled by agreement with the king of France.

But Henry proved a match for the old schemer. Peace with France! Yes, said the king, on fair conditions. Let the treaties lately signed be honestly fulfilled, and there is peace between the realms ; if not——.

Cæsar assured King Henry that the French agreed to his conditions. Cæsar was lying ; but the king pretended to believe his word, until the peace was actually broken by the French. While Sigismund pottered and bargained, Armagnac assaulted Harfleur, and the fire, so lately quenched in blood, blazed up again.

Then Cæsar spoke against the French, affecting to have been deceived by them ; but having neither ships nor money, he remained in England —begging, lying, trafficking—he and his swarms of ritters. Hints were given to them. Cæsar was told that he was free to go ; but, as he urged, he had no money, and not a ship was given to carry him over sea. In London, where the citizens loathed him on account of Huss, he was reviled and pelted in the streets. He rode away in haste

towards Canterbury, leaving his debts unpaid. In order to buy his way out of England, he was forced to sign a treaty with the king his host; not, as he intended when he came to Windsor Castle, in favour of the French, but against the princes whom he most wished to serve and please.

Then only he was suffered to re-cross the straits. His comfort was that he could break his word. Arrived at Constance, he forgot the treaty, and, inflamed against the Reformers, he added Jerome of Prague to the martyrology adorned by Huss. But his ritters were more grateful than their master. Ere they left the country, they announced that England was a paradise, where food was good and lodging cheap, where women were fair and smiths were kind, where money was plentiful and ale was strong. According to these guests, not only Windsor Castle, but the whole of England, was a paradise of knights.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WITCH QUEEN.

1416–19.

JUANA, the queen-dowager, had the reputation of a witch. Sorcery had been her family talent. In her native country, every man and woman of that generation held to magic as a second faith. Carlos the Bad, her father, had been more than suspected of removing enemies by means of spells. After Navarre, the superstitious girl had gone to Brittany, a land of dark and terrible legends. In that country of her early marriage, she had improved her natural taste for secret studies and unholy rites. In Westminster and Windsor she retained her ancient loves. Father Randolf, her confessor, was a master in the craft, but he was not the only agent of the nether fiend employed by Queen Juana. Sorcerers formed a part of her establishment; Roger Colles, her domestic

magician, and Petronel Brocard, her domestic astrologer, being as much a part of her recognised household as her chaplain, usher, and abigail. For her proficiency in these black arts Juana was disliked and feared by the unlearned knights and captains in the English camp.

After the war broke out with France, her miseries—all of which she laid at her stepson's door—seduced her into practices with the devil, which confirmed her bad repute, and led to her arrest and punishment.

When he was on the point of sailing from Southampton, for his first dash at Harfleur, Henry had given the queen-dowager his license to reside at Windsor Castle in his absence. In the joy of finding himself in arms, ready to meet his enemies face to face, his harder mood had softened towards this woman. After all, she was his father's widow, and she bore the name of queen. A list of houses had been offered to her choice, in case her eye should tire of the view from Havering and her heart grow weary of the solitude of Ledes. Among those residences he had placed the royal house. Juana was fond of Windsor, having always lived on heights, and she was probably at Windsor Castle, when her stepson's messengers came in

with news of the great victory of Agincourt; bringing orders from the conqueror for a solemn service of thanksgiving at St. Paul's, in which the court and nation were to join. That service was performed in London, with the Juana in her place, as head of the whole pageantry. Juana had to stand before the altar with a smiling face, while the choir thanked God for a victory which rent her to the heart.

Few ladies of either French origin or French connexion stood beyond the reach of mourning after the dark day of Agincourt. No woman of either that origin or that connexion had been so sorely smitten on that battle-field as the victor's stepmother, Queen Juana.

First in her catalogue of woes, her elder brother, Albret, the gallant Constable of France, had fallen on the battle-field. Juana felt in his death a double loss. Albret was not only her brother, but the father-in-law of her favourite son. Arthur, that favourite son, had lately been united to his cousin, Jeanne d'Albret of Navarre. By Albret's death, the bride and groom, just entering on their married lives, were left without the Constable's strong support. Next in her list of miseries, her son-in-law, the duke of Alençon,

had been also killed. Her daughter Marie, the cause of so much bitterness to Harry of Monmouth, was now a widow, with a brood of boys and girls, almost as numerous and as hungry as the queen's own children. Last and worst misery of all, Juana's darling—Arthur, earl of Richmond—was himself a prisoner in her stepson's hands.

Duke Jean, her eldest son, had managed to keep aloof, like Charles and Louis; but her son Arthur, following the banner of his gallant father-in-law, the Constable, had joined his peers; like his cousin of Orleans, quitting his young bride, and like him falling prisoner on the field.

To crown these miseries, Henry refused to recognise Juana's son as a prisoner held to ransom, or even as an enemy taken in honest fight. Arthur, earl of Richmond, said the king, was not a foreign prince. He was an English peer. His father before him had held the earldom of Richmond. Some years before, Arthur had himself come over to Windsor Castle, and done homage to King Henry for his English lands.

Some doubts, indeed, had grown about the title, and the king had lately given the coronet of Richmond to his brother John, regent and duke of Bedford. Still, he regarded Arthur as an English

peer ; therefore, as a subject and a rebel, taken in arms against his sovereign lord.

When he first came to England with his captives, Henry, on the queen's entreaty, had allowed the mother and her son to meet. Juana was at Westminster when the triumph swept from Charing Cross, with Eu and Orleans, Nevers, Boucicault, and Bourbon, in the royal train. Arthur was in that train, but placed apart, behind the princes, as a man unworthy of a place with honourable foes. Juana sent for the unhappy prisoner to her cabinet. The young man had not seen her face for many years. Juana knew that in her lust of rank and money she had neglected every duty of a mother towards her son. Loving him, as a lioness loves her whelp, with a hot animal fondness, she had not the less been able to put him upon one side, never allowing him to stand in her own light. Over him, as over every other obstacle, she had clomb to queenly rank. But now that, in his honeymoon, he had fallen to an enemy's sword, her heart leapt open to his love. Yet, they had been such strangers to each other, that her mind misgave her. Would he know her face ? A morbid curiosity induced her to test the cry of nature. She was used to tricks and sorceries and comedies. She would play a comedy

with her son. Setting a lady on her chair of state, she stood back in the press, and bade the ushers of her chamber bring her son, the count de Richmond, to her room. Arthur, on entering, saluted the strange lady as his mother, and was prattling on with her, when that false mother bade him face about him and salute the other ladies in her room. He passed from one to other, unaware of his mother's trick. At last Juana sobbed aloud:

'Unhappy son, you do not know me then!'

No. How should he? She had quitted him, and all her other children, to become a queen. Boys and girls, infants in arms, young men and maids, all had been left to strangers, so that she might cross the Channel and assume a crown. Unhappy son! Unhappy mother!

Brief and wretched had been their interview in that royal palace, which the queen had bought her right to enter at so great a price. That right had passed away. At Westminster she was a tenant, not a mistress; subject to the will of one who scorned her, and whom she in turn abhorred with all her heart and brain. That man was master of her son; her son, who came to her and knew her not. What could she say?—what do? Love, beyond that of a lioness for her whelp, was not

to burn between these two—as yet. Love might be born again; but for the present, love was dead. Food, clothes, and money, she could give her son; much as a lioness might supply her offspring with a hunk and bone. She gave him a thousand nobles for his pocket, and a quantity of stuff for clothes. From her apartment he had been conducted to the Tower.

She had not been allowed to see her son, the rebel peer, again.

After some detention in the Tower, Arthur had been sent to the secluded inland fortress of Fotheringay. While his comrades, Orleans and Bourbon, were received at Windsor, lodged in the palace, and invited to the jousts and festivals, Arthur had been treated as a criminal. When, on the approaching outbreak of the second war, Orleans had been sent to Fotheringay, Arthur was brought to Windsor, not, like Orleans, as a guest, but as a prisoner to the king and state, under the Constable's special care. Stanley had charge of him, and no doubt lodged him in the Norman tower. Once, and once only, the king relented towards him for an instant. Arthur begged leave to go to Nantes, where he expected to raise the money for his ransom. But the king saw

reason to suspect his word, the lenient mood passed by, and Henry's iron grasp was not again relaxed.

When, after Cæsar's failure to cajole the king, the second war commenced, and Henry again invaded France, Juana's passions, which were always dark and brooding, took a more criminal and fatal turn. Calling in her secret agents, Roger Colles and Petronel Brocard, she requested them to study with her how to wither and destroy the king by means of sorcery. Father Randolf, her confessor, was engaged to help them by his skill as a divine, in making compacts with the powers of darkness. Figures of the king were shaped by witch and sorcerer; figures of wax, which, being cursed by spells, were pierced by many pins, and set in a warm place to melt. 'As they dissolve and perish, even so shall he dissolve and perish,' ran the incantation.

But the doings of this secret witch-mote soon came out. Randolf had enemies among the priests, who stuck at nothing. Whispers went about that Father Randolf, the queen-dowager's magician, was engaged in making spells against the king. Bedford, left regent by his brother, put out his hand. Randolf was hunted down. Arrested in the isle of Guernsey, he made a clean breast of the affair,

bringing in the queen-dowager, as well as Petronel Brocard and Roger Colles. On Randolf's confession, Bedford and the council issued warrants for the queen-dowager's arrest. Juana was taken at Havering, and all her manor-houses were entered, searched, and held by officers of the crown. Orders were given for the arrest of Colles and Brocard, her confederates in these practices against the king.

Randolf's confession left Juana hopeless of defence. He was her spiritual father, as well as her accomplice in magic. Under his eyes the work of evil had been done. Henry was absent, conquering province after province; but his brother, the duke of Bedford, held the sword of justice in his hands.

By Bedford's orders the whole of Juana's servants were dismissed. Randolf, carried to the Tower, was strangled in that fortress by a brother priest. Juana, after a brief confinement in Ledes castle, was immured by Bedford and his council, as a witch, in Pevensey—that dismal prison by the Sussex coast, from which the duke of York had raised to her his cries of misery.

Juana's ruin brought on that of her son Arthur, who was now removed by Bedford's orders from

his Windsor lodgings to his former prison-cell at Fotheringay.

The witch-queen's sorceries pulled the roof about her head. For ages afterwards, her memory haunted Pevensey, but Windsor Castle saw the witch-queen and the witch-queen's progeny no more.

CHAPTER XXVII.

KATE, SWEET KATE.

1420-1.

WINDSOR Castle was prepared for a different mistress to Juana, the witch-queen, in Madame Catharine de France; a younger sister of the king's old love—la Petite Reine.

Sweet Kate—good Kate—kind Kate—fair Kate—dear Kate! According to his poet, Harry of Agincourt never tired of heaping epithet on epithet of fondness in his wooing of Madame Catharine; though he wooed her like a soldier, in a voice, and with a gesture, not be denied. Harry summed up his forms of passion and his faults of language in the ringing phrase:

'In true English, I love thee, Kate.'

Windsor was now the sanctuary and headquarters of St. George, the national saint. The royal army bore his banner, and every soldier

in that army wore his cross. The men marched forth as soldiers of St. George, bearing his red cross on a white ground, and rallying to the cry of 'Hey, St. George!' Yet Henry's first thought, on landing in his new enterprise at Toucques, near Harfleur, was to conquer Kate—sweet Kate, kind Kate, dear Kate!

For a man so handsome, so heroic, with a crown to give away, and a renown that filled the world, Henry had been miserably unhappy in his love affairs. Marie of Brittany and Isabel of France were not the only women who had jilted him. Offers had been made for him, and all with his consent, in Denmark, Naples, and Castile. In each and all those kingdoms he had failed. Juana's arts had always been employed to cross and vex him; but the sorceress-queen had been the agent, not the principal, in his many failures. From her chair of state, she had been able to direct her shafts with a good aim, but they had come already barbed and poisoned to her hand. The young man's titles, not his merits, were the point. Was he a prince in right as well as fact? Was he secure of keeping by the sword what he and his family had gained by the sword? No sovereign likes to set his daughter on a falling throne.

Success had not condoned his father's sin. Bolingbroke had been a king, but ruling under protest of a nearer prince. While princes of the elder branch survived, no prudent man had cared to send his daughter to the English court. Hence, in the face of Harry of Agincourt's fine person and splendid fame, his suits had been rejected in all quarters. If the earl of March were only dead! Had Edmund died when Roger died, Henry would have been the foremost prize in Europe. But while Mortimer was alive, no princess in Europe was willing to become his wife and queen. Never was man so tempted to do wrong; yet Henry would not touch one hair of his young rival's head. He loved the prince, so young, so deeply injured; and the prince, his friend and confidant, adored him in return. To Mortimer's affection, Henry owed his warning of the Southampton plot. Fearless and strong, he stood by Mortimer in court and camp, forgetting the rival in the friend. Mortimer was going with him into France, not as a captive to be watched, but in command of a division of the English troops.

No country had disputed Bolingbroke's success so long and savagely as France. In time, the kings of Aragon, Navarre, and Sicily came in.

Denmark and the Netherlands accepted facts. Pope and emperor acknowledged the house of Lancaster as kings. France held aloof. Year after year the house of Valois refused to recognise the house of Lancaster. According to the French, Henry was duke, not king, or only king by violence. In all French proclamations, he had been described as Henry of Lancaster. His ministers, who went to Paris, had not been received by Charles in person; neither had passports been given to them, as to the agents of acknowledged kings. The prince's suit to Madame Isabel had been treated with derision. Contrary to the usages of nations, one of the English heralds had been flung into a jail. When Bolingbroke wrote to Charles, his message had been left without an answer. Patient and enduring, Bolingbroke had borne this insolence, but he was conscious of his isolation in the world. When dying in the Jerusalem chamber—pilgrim and crusader to the last—he had spoken to the prince his son. Henry had answered him as he might have done the morrow after Agincourt:

'If you die king, I shall hold the crown as you have done; my sword against all comers.'

In dying, Bolingbroke had sighed the simple words:

'Son, I refer it all to God.'

And so the splendid sovereign had retired in favour of his yet more splendid son.

Harfleur and Agincourt had tamed the pride of Valois. Turning the shafts of Philippe and Louis against themselves, Henry now denounced the king and dauphin as usurpers, and described the king not as Philippe of France, but merely as Philippe de Valois. Henry, heir of Edward of Windsor, claimed the crown of France.

Love, revenge, ambition, urged him to strengthen this claim by union with Madame Kate, now the one single daughter of his enemy Charles. Leaving his Windsor festival, his thoughts were fixed on Kate. Landing at Toucques, his thoughts were fixed on Kate. Riding through Harcourt and Evreux, cities which surrendered to his arms without a blow, his thoughts were fixed on Kate. Storming into Caen, Falaise, and Aigle, flaunting his banner of St. George—the red cross on a white ground—from their highest towers, his thoughts were fixed on Kate. Breaking with leonine joy into Alençon, he was diverted for a moment into

other thoughts; but here again, events and passions led him back to his original thought of Kate.

An agent from the dauphin came into Alençon to inquire what terms the English were disposed to grant. In substance, Henry gave for answer: Kate; the old English provinces, and Kate; a dowry worthy of a queen, and Kate; the regency of France, and Kate.

Kate was the first and last. All other things might change; but his demand for Kate was made for once and all. Till he was married to that princess, and his wife were housed at Windsor Castle, he was resolute not to sheathe his sword.

And what said Madame Kate? Her mother, Isabeau the Wicked, had contrived a meeting of the king and princess. Henry had seen good portraits of the lady, and his passion was inflamed by finding that her face was lovelier than the painter's art had put on canvass. And the lady's heart was also touched. From that first day of meeting, though they were not yet betrothed, they were taken each by each, in secret, on a pledge of love and faith. According to Queen Isabeau, her daughter Catharine yearned

and pined for her English hero with an ardour that eclipsed his own.

No girl in Europe had a home so wretched and unbearable as Kate. Her father was insane, with murder on his soul and leprosy in his flesh. Her mother was unfaithful to her husband and neglectful of her children. Kate was lodged with her mad parent in that Hôtel St. Pol, in which Mowbray had first seen her sister, Madame Isabel. In that dismal lodging, Isabeau left her with very little food and scarcely any clothes. Some days, while her absent mother was rioting with her paramour, the poor child had to fast. One day, the royal idiot, moping at the table, suddenly recovered his memory and his reason. There was nothing for his child to eat. Calling his attendants, he was told by them that Madame Kate was often left by Isabeau to starve.

Around her, in the Louvre, in the streets, and by the river margin, there was hot and sanguinary strife.

Blood feuds divided every branch of the reigning house. Her uncle, the late duke of Orleans, had been murdered by his cousin the duke of Burgundy; Burgundy in turn was murdered by some partisans of the house of Orleans. Her

mother, Queen Isabeau, had been arrested, liberated, re-arrested, and again set free. Two of Catharine's brothers, Louis and Jean, each in turn dauphin, had died within a few months; the busybodies of her household whispering that the boys had died of poison, given to them from their mother's hand!

Such was the family circle out of which Harry of Agincourt intended to snatch his royal mate.

First, Cherbourg fell; then Rouen fell. Mortimer, in command of an English force, appeared before the gates of Paris. France, divided into factions, lighted with burning towns, cried out on every side for a peace-maker—for a master, strong enough to put down civil war. Advancing on the capital, Henry raised his terms of peace; but in these terms, however high, the foremost article was always Kate.

'Fair cousin,' he said at Pontoise to the duke of Burgundy, who came into his camp to treat for peace, 'we will either have the daughter of your king, or drive him and you out of this kingdom.'

Burgundy replied with spirit:

'Sire, you are pleased to say so, but you will find that job a hard one.'

Confident in his army, Henry rode forward, capturing town by town, and scattering the French troops which threw themselves across his path. More broken than before, the council of regency sued for peace once more. Isabeau had taken a fancy for the English king. He was a man; and Kate, her daughter, urged her to conclude a truce, and bring about a match. So Isabeau asked the English king to name his terms.

'Send Kate to me,' the king replied, 'for I will treat with no one else.'

Urged alike by Catharine's wishes and by Henry's victories, Isabeau sent this message to the English camp:

'Come to Troyes, and you shall have the princess, and with her you shall have the crown of France.'

After their marriage, Henry and Kate returned to England, to be crowned at Westminster and to take possession of their Windsor home.

At Windsor Castle, Catharine saw the king of Scots, who soon became a favourite in her circle. At her coronation feast, James sat on Catharine's left hand, under a royal canopy, like a reigning king. James offered the young queen a cup of wine, and Kate presented him the goblet out of

which she had drunk his wine. She begged the king her husband to allow such measures to be taken as would set his prisoner free. At Windsor Castle, on St. George's day, the king of Scots was knighted in her presence, and received into the order of St. George; both of which acts of favour he acknowledged to his royal patroness, Madame Kate.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MAID OF HONOUR.

1421.

One window of the poet's chamber in the Devil's tower looked down into the garden lying on the slope and in the fosse. James was fond of musing at that window. In the queen's absence from Windsor Castle, that garden, nestling in the shadow of his turret, had a tranquil air, which lured all kinds of singing birds to gather in the shrubs and on the coigns of wall and rampart, where, in spring-time, they piped and chirped their music. Spring-time after spring-time, James had listened to their songs; and, after listening to these songs, had fancied he could understand their drift. The scene is painted by himself:

> Now was there made, fast by the tower's wall,
> A garden fair; and in the corneris set
> An arbour green, with wandis long and small,
> Railit about, and so with treis set,
> Was all the place, and hawthorn hedges knet,

That lyf was none, walking there forbye
That might within scarce any wight espy.

So thick the boughis and the leaves green,
Be-shaded all the alleys that there were,
And middist every arbour might be seen
The sharp green sweete juniper
Growing so fair, with branches here and there,
That on it seemet to a lyf without
The boughis spread the arbour all about.

In this secluded spot, he, leaning on his window in the Devil's tower, listened to the nightingales, until he learned their language, and discovered that their notes meant nothing less than Love :

And on the small green twistis sat
The little sweete nightingale, and sang
So long and clear the ympness consecrate
Of Lovis use ; now soft, now loud amang,
That all the gardens and the wallis rang
Right of their song, and as the couple next
Of their sweet harmony, and lo the text !

What text ? What was that nightingale in the Maiden's garden singing so sweetly in the poet's ear ? This, he imagined, and no other strain :

Worship ye, that lovers be, this May !
For of your bliss the calends are begun ;
And sing with us—Away, Winter, away !
Come, Summer, come ! the sweet season and sun !

The birds were free; they wanted only love and light; the love that comes with spring, the light that shines in summer days. These were the lessons he had learned by listening to the birds, in that Maid of Honour's garden, lying so softly, shining so brightly, in the shadow of his prison wall.

With Catharine's coming to Windsor Castle, came a change to every one about the royal house. That garden was no longer left to the nightingales, who only sang to him of love. Hard by the south port, leading to the park, stood the building occupied by the Maids of Honour, and a passage from those buildings led into the garden in which his friends, the nightingales, sang their song. James found to his delight, that young and winsome girls came trooping out into that pleasant greenery; at once a pleasure and temptation to a captive in the tower above.

The king of Scots had need of comfort in his solitude. Bad news came in from Scotland, where his people were crying out for him—upbraiding Heaven for him—denouncing Albany for him—and only stopping in their cries when they were told, in very plain words, that they might have him back on paying his ransom down. Albany,

his wicked uncle, was no more; but Fife, his turbulent cousin, had succeeded to his dukedom and his regency. Fife was a brute; coarse, sensual, and fantastic in his tastes. All Scotland groaned beneath his yoke. Yet no one dreamed of raising money for the king's release. The sentiment of loyalty seemed dying from the earth. When Lion Heart was taken prisoner by the Austrians, England made haste to buy him off. Even David Bruce was ransomed by his countrymen. But Orleans, Bourbon, and the other French princes were abandoned to their fate. King James, allowed by Stanley to write letters and receive agents in the Devil's tower, kept up a constant correspondence with his people. Good advice was sent by him to Perth, but as the regent was against his policy, much of this good advice was thrown away. A war of race was burning on the Highland border, where the Gael and Saxon stood in presence of each other; Gael on his barren heath and rocky crag, Saxon in his wooded strath and fertile dale. A war, too, raged between the mainland and the isles; these isles being tenanted by Gaels, who fought against the Scottish crown, just as the Cymri fought against the English crown. The towns

were rent by strife, the hamlets burnt with fire. In almost every family there was a feud, like that which had riven the royal house in twain. Peace, law, and order were unknown; each chief of clan doing what he liked, with Fife, the king's regent, setting him an example in the ways of guile and fraud, of rapine, lust, and blood.

Yea, James had need of comfort in the Devil's tower. One day, as James sat musing at his open window, he observed a lady, pacing on the sward below him. Fearing to alarm her, he drew back, but finding in a moment that she was alone, unconscious of a man's eyes being bent on her, he plucked up heart to peep again. What happened to him, must be told in his own words:

> And therewith cast I down mine eyes again,
> Where, as I saw, walking under the tower,
> Full secretly, now coming her to 'plain,
> The fairest or the freshest young flower,
> That ever I saw, methought, before that hour,
> For which sudden abate, anon astart
> The blood of all my body to my heart.

Timid and excited, James drew back into his chamber, keeping himself unseen. Was that fair thing a mortal form, or but the coinage of his brain? The lady, unaware of him, was walking

in the garden up and down. Some damsels joined her; but between these damsels and herself there seemed a difference as of earth and sky. She looked all grace, and dignity, and richness; even in her attire she seemed the daughter of a king. The damsels laughed and prattled, in the way of girls; that lady, in her hour of privacy and leisure, bore herself like one who wears a crown.

The poet's second glance was fatal to his peace:

. . . Suddenly my wit, my countenance,
My heart, my will, my nature, and my mind were changed.

The lady of that vision was unknown to him by sight. That she was one of the queen's Maids of Honour, he inferred from her presence in that garden; that she was a person of high degree was certain from her dress and bearing; but beyond these inferences from the facts presented to his eyes, the king was left to wander in the dark.

What she was like in face and figure his senses told him, and he threw the picture into rhyme:

. . . Her golden hair and rich attire,
In fretwise couched with pearly white,
And great balls levening as the fire,
With many an emerald and fair saphire,

And on her head a chaplet fresh of hue
Of plumis parted red, and white, and blue.

Silks, jewels, feathers, dazzled the captive's sight; and he made notes of each and all; but these were not the things to strike him most:

. . . Above all this, there was well I wote,
Beauty enough to make a world to dote.

Next day, that vision of the garden came again. Leaning from his window-sill, he watched the lady in her walk, yet taking pains to keep himself unseen. Day after day, she walked that sward, and touched those flowers. The queen was now at Windsor, and he gathered that the lady of his vision was in close attendance on the queen. Day after day the king grew bolder in his watch, but fancied he was out of sight. He snatched a pen, and rhymed out sonnets in her praise. He touched his lute, and set those rhymes to music. Day by day the image of that siren grew more perfect in his sight. Out from the doorway of the Maid of Honour's lodgings stept this gracious dame; a lady robed in white, with dress looped up, a net of pearls imprisoning her yellow locks, and a thick chain of gold depending from her neck. A little dog, with silver bells, frisked at

her feet, and in the distance walked two damsels, waiting on her mood.

Sometimes she walked about the sward and mused. At other times she read a book. One day she sat in the arbour, sang to herself, and—slept. In every pose and phase, she was divine. The captive, eyeing her movements from his window, dared not speak, lest he should frighten her away. What should he do?

> I thought eke thus: if I my handis clap,
> Or if I cough, then will she flee away;
> And if I hold my peace, then will she nap.
> Then what is best? . . . .
> . . . Blow, winds, blow, and do the leavis shake,
> Some twig may wag, and make her to awake.

Waking from her doze, and finding herself alone, the vines and flowers about her feet, the Norman keep above her head, she cleared her throat and sang a song; to which the captive answered like a lover, with a verse of rhyme:

> The ditty there I made
> Direct to her that was my heartis queen.

The lady rose and left the garden, followed by her dog and bells; the vision fading from his eyes, the tinkle dying on his ears. Chained to

his window-sill, he watched her to the end, then gazed into the sky, and dreamed a dream; a dream of which that unknown lady was the heroine, and he, the poet-prisoner, was the hero.

Lingering by his prison eyelet till the setting sun, going down behind the Norman keep,

> Had bid farewell to every leaf and flower,

he then asked himself the question:

Who was that lady of the golden hair, bound up in nets of pearl?

CHAPTER XXIX.

LADY JANE.

1422–4.

BRIGHT of face and high of blood was Lady Jane, eldest daughter of John, earl of Somerset. Her father being the son of John, duke of Lancaster, by his third duchess, Catharine de Roet, Lady Jane was first cousin to the reigning king. As Henry of Agincourt had no sister, Lady Jane had been, until the king's marriage with Catharine, the foremost lady of his house. But though her rank was high, her family had been unfortunate enough to throw a tinge of sadness on her youth.

What Lancaster could do to purge away the original stain of her father's birth, had been done by means of a royal patent and a papal brief. By these two acts his children had been purified in blood, and placed in order of succession to the crown. But Bolingbroke, though willing to grant

his half-brothers peerages and mitres, had been opposed on principle to giving them the crown. Lifted to the throne by conquest and the public voice, Bolingbroke and his son had held their own, and meant to hold their own ; but neither of these great Lancastrian sovereigns wished to bind their country to all future time. Hence, Bolingbroke had inserted in the patent which legitimated the children of Catharine de Roet a clause which left to future times the question of their succession to the crown. John, earl of Somerset, Lady Jane's father, felt this clause more keenly than the rest. Henry, his brother, was in the Church, and had no family to found, enrich, and raise. Dean, bishop, chancellor, cardinal, he was satisfied with his share of life. But John was piqued. Unhappily, he had vexed his brother, who, on rising to the throne, lopped off his marquisate, and left him only the position of a peer.

Lady Jane was but an infant when her father died. Like James himself, she was an orphan and alone. Henry, the king, was kind to her; not only in recognising her as his cousin—his 'fair' cousin—but in placing her about his queen.

This was the unknown lady in the green

arbour, with whose bright face the king of Scots had fallen in love.

The queen soon learned the captive's secret. If a garden can be seen from a tower, that tower can be seen from the garden. When a king, young, handsome, and a bachelor, occupies a turret looking over a lady's garden, feminine eyes are not unlikely to be lifted up in pity towards the grated windows. Feminine eyes were certainly lifted from that garden of the Norman keep. And what was seen above? A pair of pensive eyes, crowned by a pallid brow, now peering wistfully at the sky, now bent in sadness on the trees and flowers. In no long time, the favourite maid of honour was aware of things. The captive rhymed her virtues, and repeated them to his lute. Love warbles far. The lady caught his song, and answered to his burthen with a sigh.

When Catharine heard of this romantic passion in her garden, under the window of her room, she entered with a friendly ardour into her fair cousin's love affairs. In age, in rank, and in accomplishments, King James and Lady Jane seemed suited to each other. If the king of Scots desired to carry back an English bride to

Perth, where could he find a match so good as Lady Jane?

The king raised no objections. He was starting on his final expedition into France, leaving the queen at Windsor to conduct affairs. King James, if pliant, might be useful to him in his French campaign. James had the feeling of a man; a feeling that forbade him to propose for Lady Jane while he was still a captive in her cousin's house. She, worthy of a crown, could not be asked to share his chamber in the Devil's tower. Proposals were again being made for ransom. Douglas and other Scotch commissioners were expected at the English court; but such affairs take time, and Henry had no time to spare. Albany was entering into league with France. Seven thousand mercenaries had crossed to France, under the command of Albany's brother, the earl of Buchan. Brave as lions, and familiar with the English way of fighting, these Scottish bands were causing serious trouble in the English ranks. Clarence, the king's brother, had been killed by them; the first disaster suffered by the English arms in France. Burning to meet these mercenaries and avenge his brother's death, Henry was eager to set sail for Normandy. Yet he was

politic in his haste. Those mercenary bands were Scots, the subjects of his captive in the Devil's tower. If James were in the field, serving under him as a volunteer, those hireling bands would hardly dare to face their sovereign. For Lady Jane's sake, the king of Scots was now being treated as a comrade rather than a captive; and this freedom brought fresh perils to the English king. If James were left behind at Windsor Castle, while his armies were in France, some luckier man than Payne might find a way into the Devil's tower. On all grounds, therefore, it seemed wise to carry the king of Scots along with him to France.

Calling on his guest at Windsor, Henry explained to James his project for invading France, and offered him a portion of his tent. To James this invitation held out solid gains. Though skilled in books, the king of Scots had seen but little of the world, and nothing at all of camps and battle-fields. Yet such things were the education of a king. To study warfare under such a master of the art as Henry, was a gain beyond all price. No less capital was the gain of looking on France and French affairs from the position of Queen Catharine's friend. One point, and one point only,

he reserved. The French and Scotch were ancient allies. As a king of Scots he could not fight against the French. To sail with Henry, and to see the fight from Henry's tent, were things to take his heart; but he must not be asked to join in council, and still less in arms, against his ancient friends. The king accepted James's terms. Three things were gained by him in having James's company in his camp. His captive was removed from enterprises such as those of Payne; his presence was a pledge of quiet on the Scottish border; finally, he might become a check on Buchan's mercenary bands.

Henry's career in this last inroad into France was like a miracle. Neither native troops, nor mercenary bands, withstood his onset. France was quickly at his feet. The crazy king, who had already, on the prayer of Isabeau, named him his successor on the throne, was dying; so that Henry was certain, in a few short weeks, to be not only king of England, but king of France. James was dazzled by the hero. But the rider on the pale horse had entered unobserved into the lists. Suddenly the sword was stricken from the conqueror's hand, and in his castle of Vincennes,

Harry of Agincourt gave up his spirit in the spring-tide of his life.

King James, on his return to Windsor Castle after Henry's death, was kindly welcomed by the queen and Lady Jane. Although her griefs were heavy, Catharine had time and strength to help the lovers. Douglas, accompanied by Leighton, bishop of Aberdeen, and other commissioners, came to Windsor. Catharine took a leading part in the affair, and being backed by Cardinal Beaufort, Lady Jane's uncle, she was able to arrange the ransom and secure the match.

King James being a knight of the Garter, and Lady Jane a dame of that society, their bridal rites were celebrated with pomp and state.

'We must confess,' said the bishop of Aberdeen to the English council, 'that hitherto our king hath been better and more secure amongst you than if he had been in his own native country; for your favours have been many ways extended towards him, having brought him up in all liberal sciences and arts, so that his abode with you seemeth rather to have been a remaining in an academy than in a captivity, and that he had been lost if he had not been lost.'

The question of his restoration lay behind. Douglas and Leighton hinted that England should send an army to restore their king. Albany was likely to resist their passage of the Tweed.

'Tis your swords,' said the bishop of Aberdeen, 'that should restore him to the possession of his royal diadem; and we expect that, as you have in many ways rendered him yours, you will not refuse to engage him yet more by his liberty, which he must acknowledge wholly and freely to receive from you. By benefits and love to overcome a king is more than by force of arms.'

Assisted by an English force, King James returned to Edinburgh, taking home his bride; in whom, through all his coming years, he found a mate not only worthy of his love, but of the highest help for him in the great work for which he had been trained. They made good laws; they opened roads; they introduced civility at court. In their own lives, they set a pattern of domestic love. Jane never left her husband's side. With him through good and evil days, aider and comforter in all his efforts, she was with him even to the last, when the assassins' poignards struck him to the heart.

And to his latest hour, the king of Scots was true to that love which he had nursed and sung in his captivity at the Devil's tower. The last word on his lip was—Jane.

CHAPTER XXX.

HENRY OF WINDSOR.

1421–30.

HENRY the Fifth to Madame Kate—in Shakspeare's words:

'Shall not thou and I, between St. Denis and St. George, compound a boy, half-French, half-English, that shall go to Constantinople, and take the Turk by the beard? Shall we not? What sayest thou, my fair flower-de-luce?'

The boy compounded of these fiery particles was Henry of Windsor—that poor weakling, who, born in a stately palace, crowned king of France no less than king of England, was to end his days by a kinsman's dagger in the Wakefield tower, leaving behind him a ruined kingdom, and the reputation of an idiot and a saint.

On setting out for France, Henry had entreated Catharine not to 'take her chamber' in the royal

house. At any other place—Ledes, Havering, Eltham, Kennington—his heir might see the light of day; but Windsor Castle, his political Olympus, was, in the great warrior's view, too high a birth-place for his son. The younger branch of the Plantagenets were lowly born; tempting no stroke of Fortune by the splendour of their birth. Bolingbroke was obscure and fortunate; Monmouth was obscure and fortunate. These names provoked no envy, and the men who bore them had risen point by point, until their greatness filled the earth. No superstition moved the king; but, like all heroes of the highest class, he kept his pride and passion under stern control. No lesson from his breviary came so readily to his lips as that which says, The first shall be last, and the last shall be first—the lowly shall be exalted, and the lofty shall be cast down. Great names, he knew, are apt to take the place of deeds. Cæsar, cradled in the Capitol, leans back and yawns, imagining there is nothing more for him to do on earth. Henry detested a do-nothing prince. Deeds, not words, were the accomplishments of his house.

But sweet Kate had been of other mind. A Valois, not a Lancastrian, she was thinking of the

future dauphin and the future king of France. Born in the Louvre, she was steeped and swathed in purple; even though that purple were the colour and the cover of a rag. Pride was her consuming passion. Eltham — Havering — Kennington — the birth-place of a king of France! Spurning the wisdom of the wise, she had retired to Windsor Castle, and her child, Henry of Windsor, dauphin and prince, was born and cradled on the royal hill.

Though ravished to hear that a son was born to him — heir of two splendid crowns — Henry had turned white on learning that his son had come into the world at Windsor Castle — that forbidden pinnacle:

'Where was he born?' he had asked the messenger again.

'At Windsor, sire.'

'At Windsor!'

Henry Fitz-Hugh, his chamberlain, who had been standing near the king, reports that on hearing this news repeated, he had exclaimed — mixing up some old wife's prophecy of himself with a sad forecast for his son,—'I, Henry, born at Monmouth, shall small time reign, and much get,'— and then added, mournfully — 'Henry, born at

Windsor, shall long reign and all lose.' Sadly —very sadly—he had dismissed the tidings, which had turned his highest gladness into gloom and misery: 'As God wills, so let it be.'

Henry of Monmouth had indulged in no illusion as to either France or England. He had gained the crown of France, but he had won it from the natural heirs, and had to hold it by the sword against those natural heirs. Bolingbroke, his father, had gained the crown of England, but he had won it from the natural heirs, and had to hold it by the sword against those natural heirs. His infant son, born on that dizzy height, was heir to these heroic rights; rights only to be held by a succession of heroic deeds.

In both his realms, the legal claimants were surrounded by intriguing and expectant bands. In France, the dauphin, dispossessed by a crazy father and a wicked mother, was in arms, with half the country at his back. England was quiet, for the earl of March was in his camp, a trusty and contented officer. March had no son; on that side, therefore, the Lancastrian dynasty was safe.

Henry was christened at St. George's chapel with magnificent rites; duchess Jake (Jacque, Jacobia, or Jacqueline), of Holland, being his god-

mother. Jake was the queen's own choice; a sovereign princess, and the highest lady at the royal court. Kate's choice was not the less of evil augury; the lady being not only separated from her husband, Jean of Brabant, but suspected of a criminal liking for the queen's handsome and gallant brother-in-law, the 'good duke Humphrey' of poetic fame.

Jake, countess of Holland in her own right, had been wedded when a girl to the dauphin, Jean of France, who had espoused her provinces rather than her person, and intended to annex those provinces to his crown. Released by death from that poor and scrofulous lad, she had been wooed by many suitors; the most eminent, though not the most ardent, being the English duke of Bedford; the most ardent, though not the most eminent, being her uncle, Johann of Bavaria. Johann of Bavaria was a priest and bishop, well advanced in years, and sworn to live a celibate life; but, tempted by his niece's provinces, he had bought a dispensation from the pontiff, which permitted him to resign his mitre, and return to secular life. To rid herself of this aged, but not venerable uncle, Jake had appealed to Rome; on which the pope, disgusted by the old bishop's

conduct, had given her a license to marry her first cousin, Jean, duke of Brabant, whose connexion with the house of Burgundy offered her, as she supposed, the best security against her uncle. But the bishop, not to be balked by either pope or niece, had broken into her territories, and declared her titles forfeited. A civil war had broken out. One of the two great factions of the Netherlands having gone for Jake, the other had declared as fiercely for Johann. Duke Jean, her spouse, had proved unable either to rule her country or retain her love. A strong and dashing woman, large of limb and hot of temper, Jake had pitied and despised her puny mate, whose hands could hardly wield a battle-axe, whose legs could hardly bestride a war-horse. She had asked the pope for a divorce, which had been steadily refused. But Jake was one of those women who were only to be ruled by priests whom she could bend and mould to her own will. A pope who said her nay was not the pope for duchess Jake. Masking her purposes, she had left her husband's house on pretence of paying a visit to her mother at Valenciennes. Engaging an escort of the English party, she had escaped from Valenciennes to Calais, on the chance

of being allowed by the English governor at Dover to cross the Straits, and put the sea between her husband and herself.

Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, the king's brother, was then at Dover, with the rank of constable. No one could land without his leave. Jake knew him as a young and gallant bachelor, one of the great combatants of Agincourt. Crossing the sea to Dover, she had made a friend of him, and taking horse on the beach, had ridden straight to Westminster without a single pause. Gloucester, riding by her side, had been delighted with the amazon ; a fair and dashing lady, with a rich and warlike province in her gift. Duke Humphrey was a younger son.

Arriving at Windsor Castle, under escort of the duke, Jake had been welcomed by the queen, who had kept her in the court instead of urging her to return. Jake was content to stay. The tall and martial prince was always in her sight. Compared with either duke Jean or dauphin Jean, duke Humphrey was a man at every point. Liking him, Jake lingered on at Windsor, while her secretaries were moving heaven and hell for a divorce ; employing brokers and courtesans in the affair ;

not only with the pope, but with the anti-pope. A schism in the Church was good for runaway wives like Duchess Jake.

The infant king was left at Windsor Castle in the charge of Alice Boteler, while his restless mother, and his lawless godmother, were racketing about the world. Alice was allowed to slap the child; and Warwick, now his governor, was allowed to flog him. Nurse and governor both exercised their powers on the deserted boy. That side of the young monarch's life was genuine; all other sides were empty show and meaningless play. Chancellors knelt to him, but Alice slapt his hands; ambassadors parleyed to him, but Warwick broke the cane on his back. The child so slapped and caned was comically made to give directions for his own chastisement:

'If we are negligent in learning, or commit any fault, or do anything contrary to instruction, we give him (meaning the Earl of Warwick) full power, authority, license, and directions, reasonably to chastise us from time to time, according to his discretion, in the manner that other princes of our age, as well in this kingdom as in other, have hitherto been chastised, and without being

impeached or molested by us, or by any other person in future for so doing.'

From his cradle, Henry of Windsor was taught to bear bad usage with a smiling face—the proper education for a saint.

CHAPTER XXXI.

RICHARD OF YORK.

1428.

When Henry of Windsor was seven years old, the council of his kingdom gave him a companion in his cousin, Richard of York.

Richard of York was ten years older than the king; a strange young man, with frank and open eyes concealing a perturbed, unruly, and audacious mind. By order of the council, he was to lodge at court; to be received with honour and respect; but he was not to quit the Castle hill without the king's express consent. In truth, he was a prisoner of the crown.

A fight had taken place in council over this young man. In Bedford's absence, Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, was protector of the realm. In this capacity he had the leading voice in council; but the aged churchman, Cardinal de

Beaufort, shared his power. Duke and cardinal differed on the policy to be pursued towards Richard duke of York; Gloucester desiring that the prince should be courted as a friend, while Beaufort was inclined to cripple him as a future enemy. The men were ruled by different motives. Gloucester was thinking of the king and dynasty, as the succession had been fixed by parliament. Beaufort was trying to remove the limitations introduced by Bolingbroke, and to place the sons of Catharine de Roet in the order of succession, as had been first arranged by John of Gaunt with Richard of Bordeaux.

Gloucester, having nothing on his own account to fear from his cousin Richard, had helped him to obtain his uncle's dignity as duke of York. Beaufort, having made his niece, Lady Jane, a queen, was dreaming that her brother, Somerset, might live to wear a crown. Seeing in Richard of York a rival of his nephew Somerset, he wanted to clip that rival's wings. A middle course was taken by the council. Richard of York was brought to Windsor, lodged in the royal palace, and 'detained' at court. All parties recognised in him a rival of the infant king.

Who, then, was this young prince of sixteen

summers, who was henceforth to play so large a part at Windsor Castle? How had a duke of York, the representative of a younger branch, become a rival of the reigning king? John, duke of Lancaster, had been elder brother to Edward, duke of York. Why, then, were Henry of Windsor's aged and gallant councillors taking such pains to guard against the House of York?

The fact was, Richard of York had now become the legal heir. Edmund de Mortimer, earl of March, had died without a child being born to him; and all his honours and pretensions had devolved on his sister, Lady Anne. Lady Anne, that sister of the earl of March, was the mother of Richard, duke of York.

The story of this prince harks back to the heroic days of the dead sovereign—to a time before the king's first enterprise in France. Early in his reign, Henry of Monmouth had become aware that Richard of York, a younger and penniless brother of the duke of York, had fallen in love with a royal lady, whom the whole body of his councillors forbade him to espouse. This lady was no less a personage than Lady Anne de Mortimer, sister of the legal heir, and in default of Edmund's issue by his wife, herself the next of kin,

and first pretender to the English crown. Encouraged by the success of her brother's suit to Lady Anne Stafford, Lady Anne de Mortimer had not only listened to her suitor's troth, but had given him back her own. All prudent men had set their hearts against this second match. Already two of the royal houses—those of Clarence and Gloucester—had been arrayed against the king. Edward, then duke of York, was childless. Richard might succeed him in his honours. If he were matched with Lady Anne de Mortimer, the house of York would pass into legal warfare with the house of Lancaster. Then, if civil strife arose, government would have all the lines of Edward the Third united in opposition to the reigning house. Yet Henry, in his matchless generosity, had silenced all these prudent voices. The danger was remote, the misery close at hand. Smarting from his own rejected suit, and fired with sympathy for men in love, Henry had not only suffered Richard of York to marry Lady Anne de Mortimer, but, in his greatness, he had given the groom and bride a station suitable to their birth, by creating them earl and countess of Cambridge, one of the great peerages reserved for princes of the blood.

Mortimer's noble bearing had excited him to trust his sister; but Richard of York, this new recipient of the royal bounty, was a man composed of different stuff to Edmund, earl of March.

In the black treachery of that Southampton plot, which for a moment had delayed the French invasion, Richard, the new earl of Cambridge, had played the master's part. Owing his place at court, his rank in the peerage, even his wedded wife, to the king's great bounty, this man had listened to the French agents, and agreed for a large sum of money to corrupt the treasurer, Lord Scrope.

Scrope, a member of the council, was so intimate with the sovereign, that he always sat at the same table, and often slept in the same room. Commissioner for the truce, he had been treating with the court of Paris for a match between the king and Kate. Tempted by Charles's gold, this trusted councillor had consented to act with Richard of York in a treacherous and felonious rising against his royal and confiding king.

To cover their intended crime of murder, Cambridge and Scrope had gone to Edmund de Mortimer, and hinted that a blow was to be struck for him. The crown, they had said, belonged to him

of right. Henry was an intruder, whom they meant to oust. Richard, as Lady Anne de Mortimer's husband, had himself a better claim than Henry of Monmouth. Why should he not vindicate his claim? They had asked no leave of Mortimer; but, since he was the legal heir, they had let him know that in a few days he should be king in fact as well as king in right.

Braver in duty than his father, Mortimer had arrested the assassins' hands. Short trial, shorter shrift, had been given to the chief criminals. Mortimer sat among the peers who had sentenced Richard of York, his brother-in-law to death. Both criminals had confessed their guilt, and begged for mercy. Mercy on such scoundrels! Henry had ordered them out to execution, when all their honours and estates had been forfeited to the crown.

The base and criminal Richard had been married long enough to leave an infant son by Lady Anne de Mortimer. This child, christened Richard after his father's cousin, Richard of Bordeaux, was in his cradle when Alençon's battle-axe had beaten down his uncle, the duke of York. But for the attainder, he would then have been both earl and duke; but the attainder of his father

barred his right. The son of such a villain seemed to have no hope of favour; yet the heroic king had suffered his partisans to treat him as the titular earl of Cambridge no less than as the actual duke of York.

So long as Mortimer lived, he had been harmless; but when Mortimer passed away, the whole inheritance of his race had fallen to his feet. Already York, he had then become Clarence as well as York. In brief, that son of Richard of York and Anne de Mortimer had become the elder branch.

Ten years older than the king, and ten times abler than his uncle the protector, the prince, now brought to Windsor Castle, and 'detained' at court, as a mere act of prudence, had many things in his favour as a claimant: birth and law; youth, hope, and novelty; a disastrous war in France; a disordered and divided court at Windsor; a fickle and immoral queen-mother; and a heady and unreasoning protector of the realm.

Richard had no objection to be near the king, his cousin. Lodging at the royal house, he stood in the centre of events—heard of every move and stratagem in the game. At seventeen he could afford to wait. He bore his dead uncle's title of

duke of York, and his dead cousin's title of earl of March; but the higher title was the one in daily use; and thus the contending branches of the line of Edward of Windsor came to be known as the house of Lancaster and the house of York.

The house of Lancaster had the crown; the house of York represented the legal claimants of that crown.

York had not only to assert his right, but to avenge his father's death. He watched his horizon from the Norman keep; waiting until his turbulent and dissolute cousins, with the help of their confederate, Duchess Jake, had riven both kingdoms, and prepared a way for him to act as representative of law and right.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TWO DUCHESSES.

1431-41.

'INTO safe custody upon certain causes moving the said council,' a woman named Margery Jorden and a priest called Father Ashwell were committed by the council to Windsor Castle in the fall of 1431, when the feuds of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, and the Cardinal of Beaufort, were waxing to the rage of fever heat. Jorden and Ashwell were committed to the Castle prison; that is to say, the Norman tower. Margery came in under charge of John Collage, one of the king's sergeants-at-arms; Father Ashwell in the custody of John Talbot, another of the king's sergeants-at-arms. They were delivered up at Windsor to the Constable, Sir John Stanley, 'to be securely kept for certain causes interesting the said council.'

Margery Jorden was a reputed witch; the

witch of Eye, near Winchester. Father Ashwell was Prior of the order of the Holy Cross, then seated at the convent of the Holy Trinity in Aldersgate. Witch and prior were said to be connected with each other as professors of necromancy; the woman, as the priest was said to have alleged, being his mistress and instructress in her hellish craft.

Why, and by whom, were these pretended sorcerers and associates in evil-dealing sent into the custody of Stanley at the Norman tower?

Gloucester was for the moment master of the council; his enemy the Cardinal being abroad. Margery Jorden and Father Ashwell were committed to Windsor Castle on his suit.

The charge under which prior and sorceress had fallen arose out of certain facts in Duchess Jake's career — facts in which good Duke Humphrey's fame and life became involved; facts which helped the English out of France, led to the wars of York and Lancaster, and in the end prepared the triumph of Cardinal de Beaufort's policy in favour of his bastard line.

When Duchess Jake, eloping from her husband's house, had first come to Windsor Castle, Humphrey, her new adorer, was attached to Elinor

Cobham, best known as Dame Elinor, a woman who was said to have bewitched him by her beauty and constrained him by her wit and sense.

But though Humphrey loved Dame Elinor, he had not taken her in church. A younger son, he had found himself unable to wed a beautiful but penniless girl. He loved, and waited, and amused himself; not always without exposing his charmer to suspicions of allowing him too much favour for a bachelor. Beaufort, intent on bringing forward the excluded line, had left him to his own devices. Things were looking brighter for the sons and grandsons of Catharine de Roet. Of the four sons of Bolingbroke, Henry alone had a living child—the rickety little king. Henry himself was gone, and Thomas was gone. Bedford had no children. Humphrey was a single man. To keep him single, so that he might have no issue, was the aim of Cardinal Beaufort's policy; and while he lived in sin with Lady Elinor, the cardinal had closed his eyes and smiled.

Lady Elinor, the glory and the misery of a great family, was a daughter of that Reginald, Lord Cobham of Sterborough, who had been the comrade of Bolingbroke in his exile; a worthy son of the great lord Cobham who had led the van at Crécy

and Poictiers ; and a near connexion of the Kentish martyr, Sir John Oldcastle, who had recently been burnt to death. Like the martyr, Lady Elinor was a favourer of the new learning, and was therefore branded by some portion of the clergy as a heretic. Gloucester, without being so good a scholar as Lady Elinor, had similar leanings, and the fact of these tendencies towards liberal thought embittered all his intercourse with the Roman cardinal. Lady Elinor was ambitious. Nobly born and nobly bred, her family either held, or recently had held, no less than four peerages. Why should such a lady not aspire to win a royal duke? Catharine de Roet's rise had shown that even a commoner's daughter might become a royal duchess. Humphrey stood beside the throne, and very near that throne. Bedford having no son, Gloucester came next in order of succession. If the young king should have no issue, Gloucester would be king, and Gloucester's consort would be queen.

On Duchess Jake's arrival at Windsor Castle, Gloucester had turned from his bright and beautiful mistress to the stranger with the broader lands and higher titles. Jake, in her own right countess of Hainault, countess of Holland, coun-

tess of Friesland, and countess of Zeeland, held those provinces by sovereign right. In beauty, Jake was nowhere, but her Flemish towns were large and rich, and Gloucester, being a penniless younger son, had fallen in love with her estates. Duke Jean, her puny spouse, had claimed his runaway wife; a claim which hampered the English councillors both in Paris and in Westminster. Jean was the duke of Burgundy's first cousin, and an outrage on the duke might sever that connexion of the courts which was the key of English policy in France. 'At every cost preserve my treaty with the duke of Burgundy,' had been Henry's dying counsel to his brother John. Bedford had carried out the hero's plan; but Gloucester's love affairs with Duchess Jake had raised a thousand obstacles in his path. The duke of Burgundy had set his teeth against Gloucester's design of stealing his cousin's wife.

But neither Bedford's prayers nor Burgundy's threats had moved the prince. As soon as Jake should get her divorce, Hnmphrey declared that he meant to marry her. When the pope refused to sanction a divorce from Jean, Gloucester had applied to the anti-pope. The anti-pope had proved himself less severe; and after the duchess's

marriage with Jean of Brabant was annulled, Gloucester had taken her for his wife.

Gloucester had married Jake for policy; but he had not been strong enough to part from the more delicate and beautiful woman who owned his heart. Jake, when duchess of Gloucester, had offered Lady Elinor a post as lady of her house, and Elinor had accompanied the duke and duchess in their campaign against the intruding bishop, Johann of Bavaria, and his German knechts.

Johann had been easily swept aside, but when the duke of Burgundy, taking up his cousin's cause, advanced into the Netherlands, things had taken a serious turn for English interests in the Isle of France. The spectacle of these allies drawing swords against each other, had inspired the dauphin with fresh courage and supplied him with new armies. Burgundy had proposed to settle the affair by single combat, and the fiery Gloucester, taking up his glove, had offered to fight him on the festival of St. George. Both armies had retired, leaving the Duchess Jake in Mons, until the sword should have decided the moot point — whether the divorce of Duchess Jake were good in law or not; in other words, till Gloucester's thrust and Bur-

gundy's parry had determined the rival pretensions of pope and anti-pope!

Bedford, hampered by his war in France, and seeing the absurdity of his brother and his ally breaking each other's heads in such a quarrel, had employed his powers as regent to restrain his brother from going to France and fighting with the duke. To soften this restraint, he had whispered in Gloucester's ear, that if he were tired of his new wife, Duchess Jake, and would renounce his marriage with her, letting her go back to Jean, her husband, he might wed the woman he adored. Jake had been deserted by the duke, and Lady Elinor had become duchess of Gloucester, with the regent's full consent.

This turn had puzzled and alarmed the cardinal. If Lady Elinor should have a son, all Somerset's chances of succeeding would be at an end. How could he separate the hated pair? Unable to deny Lady Elinor's marriage, he spread reports abroad that she had employed the agency of magic to enchant the duke. Margery Jorden, witch of Eye, and Father Ashwell, prior of Holy Cross, with other mountebanks even more obscure, were said to have been her agents and accomplices.

The prince was maddened by these libels on his beautiful and innocent wife.

Sorcery was the darkest crime that could be brought against a woman. Sorcery was black magic; sorcery was the renunciation of Christ. Sorcery implied a compact with the devil, and a carnal yielding to the fiend. A witch was of necessity impure in morals and unsound in faith. Juana had been smitten by a charge of sorcery. As the clerical courts alone had jurisdiction in the matter, Cardinal de Beaufort would be accuser, councillor, and judge. Nothing was proved against the duchess of Gloucester; but to be accused of sorcery and heresy was a scandal, and the Church had many means of tainting and defaming persons whom her minister could not crush. These means were used against the prince's beautiful and innocent wife.

When Gloucester drove the cardinal out of England, his first care was to seize those persons who were said to be the duchess's creatures, and commit them to the Norman tower. For six months Margery Jorden and Father Ashwell lay in ward. What use he made of their arrest is not on record. They were probably detained until they proved their innocence. On giving bonds for good

behaviour, they were sent away. Jorden, the reputed witch's husband, was the surety for his wife—the witch of Eye.

Duchess Jake, detained against her will at Mons, appealed to Gloucester's love for her; but the ambition which her levity had mistaken for his love was dead. Gloucester knew no wife but Lady Elinor, whose name he had redeemed by wedlock from reproach. At length Jake's husband died, on which that lady requested Gloucester to receive her back, and to dismiss his second wife. Jake took the name of duchess of Gloucester, and denounced her rival, duchess Elinor, as a concubine. But Elinor was not disturbed in her married life, except by the continued quarrels of her husband with the cardinal.

Ten years passed on; for Duchess Elinor ten years of pride and state; during which she dwelt in palaces, and was courted as the future queen. Then came reverses. Failure in France brought weakness into camp and court; the mitre grew more potent than the sword; and as the cardinal rose, his rival, the protector, fell.

Jake dropped into the rear. Burgundy held her country, and to put an end to princely suitors, forced her to wed a nameless underling called

Franco of Borselem. She was lost henceforth to public sight.

Her rival's time now came. Having gained once more the upper hand of Gloucester, Cardinal Beaufort accused his duchess of attempting to bewitch the little king. She had made, he said, a wax image in his majesty's likeness, very much as Juana had made an image in his father's likeness. As this wax image melted, so his majesty was expected to waste away. Eager to be queen, and having no fear of God and Holy Church before her eyes, Duchess Elinor, he alleged, had tried by means of magic to unveil the future, forcing the powers of darkness to inform her when the king would die. Margery Jorden was again produced from Eye. Father Onley, Duchess Elinor's domestic chaplain, was arrested. Fearing the cardinal's violence, Elinor passed into the Sanctuary at Westminster; but sanctuary, good against the lay magistrate, was no protection against a cardinal. Torn from the altar, Elinor was brought before a council of two cardinals and five bishops, who condemned her to do penance in the street, to lose her right of law, and to live the remnant of her days a prisoner in the Isle of Man.

Barefooted, clad in white garments, pitiful, the

poor lady had to walk down Cheapside, carrying a penitential taper. With saintly patience she endured these injuries, accepting them as a chastisement from Heaven. In her great days, she said, she had been very proud and high, and it was just that pride should have a fall. She bade a last farewell to her stately house in Greenwich, to the scenes familiar to her eyes at Windsor and Westminster, and then departed by the river and the sea to her dark prison in the Isle of Man.

Her fall brought on the general wrack.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

YORK AND LANCASTER.

1442-61.

THE witch of Eye was burnt in Smithfield. Father Onley, a learned man who had written against vulgar superstitions, was condemned to death. To an ignorant monk, learning was heresy, and heresy magic. To an angry cardinal, learning was sorcery, and sorcery treason. Margery Jorden was burnt and Father Onley hung, in order that Duchess Elinor might be tainted in their deaths. These executions whetted the appetite for blood.

Gloucester, worsted in the fight, and outraged in his wife, retired from court; closing his lips, hiding his thoughts, and keeping his person out of sight. His friends were less restrained. Sir Roger Chamberlain, and other of Duchess Elinor's Kentish neighbours, were astir; talking of hiring ships and buying guns, and of the deeds they

would do in order to free the suffering lady from that melancholy prison in the Irish Sea.

Pious and timid, the king leaned more and more on the great cardinal's strength. Contrary to the policy of Gloucester, Beaufort sided with the king in his desire to marry the beautiful Marguerite of Anjou. When the king brought home his Daisy Queen to Windsor Castle, the feeble monarch was convinced that his uncle Gloucester had opposed this match, not only on his own account as next in order of the house of Lancaster, but also in the interest of his cousin, Richard of York. Gloucester, like his father and his brother, held that the line of Beaufort had no claim in law and right; the cardinal thought otherwise, and for a time the cardinal ruled the court. John, his nephew, was created earl of Kendal and duke of Somerset. In the following year he died, leaving an infant daughter, Lady Margaret. He was succeeded in the dukedom by his brother Edmund. Next after the king and Gloucester, this Edmund, duke of Somerset, regarded himself as heir to the crown. Gloucester opposed these claims, as contrary to his father's will and to the lawful settlement of the crown.

Living at Windsor, under Cardinal Beaufort's influence, Henry assented to the cardinal's views;

but with the hope that the question of his successor would be settled, not by wrangles in his court and cabinet, but by the birth of princes of his blood. That hope was long deferred.

After the king, three parties stood in presence of each other as pretenders to his crown. First, stood the duke of Gloucester; second, the duke of York; and third, the duke of Somerset. Somerset's uncle, the cardinal, was supreme at Windsor and Westminster, in the king's court, and at the king's council board. Cardinal Beaufort held that his nephew Somerset came before the duke of York. If Gloucester were removed, he held that Somerset was the nearest heir.

Could Gloucester be put away, as duchess Elinor had been put away?

Moved by more daring spirits than himself, the young king called a parliament at Bury St. Edmunds. Why? No one could tell. The ways of cardinals are not the ways of other men. Beaufort was not a man to show his game. Gloucester obeyed his summons; but the cardinal's part in the ensuing tragedy was taken up by Michael de la Pole. Pole was a kinsman and a partisan of Somerset. On the second day of that parliament, Somerset and Buckingham, accompanied by the

Constable, broke into Gloucester's lodgings, took him into custody, threw his servants into jail, and placed him under guard. The townsmen, with whom Gloucester was a favourite, began to stir. To calm them, Pole gave out that Gloucester was arrested for a plot to kill the king and set his wife, Dame Elinor, at liberty. The townsmen smiled. Convinced that their 'good duke' could easily rebut that charge, the people, who had been ready to rush on the royal guard, went home in peace. Next morning, they felt sure, would see the duke restored to them. Next morning, when they came to seek him, he was dead.

No marks of violence were visible on his body, and the guards declared that he must have either killed himself, or died a natural death. But men remembered the tragedies at Berkeley Castle and the Prince's Inn at Calais. Neither the king at Berkeley nor the duke at Calais, though foully murdered, had shown the slightest marks of violence. Sir Roger Chamberlain and four of his Kentish neighbours were arrested at the same hour as the royal duke. Every detail had been planned and ordered. Tried for an intention to release Dame Elinor, these Kentish knights were sentenced to be hung and quartered: but, before they

could be put to death, the government became alarmed. The king desired to stop the flow of blood; so, after the five men had been partly strangled, Pole stepped into the circle with the king's reprieve.

Grave discontent broke out on every side. The duke of York looked on, while Somerset played with the advancing storm. Men turned to the young prince at Windsor Castle. He was near the king, and near the throne. In manner he was affable and sweet. Gloucester had been his friend, and the chief enemies of Gloucester were his enemies. In no long time, York filled the place left vacant in the popular mind by Gloucester's death.

Six weeks after Gloucester's death, the cardinal died in misery and despair. Pole fell from power, and on his way to Calais he was hacked to pieces by assassins in a boat. A war of words, intrigues, and challenges, began to rage between the partisans of York and Lancaster. Henry sided with Somerset, and Marguerite also sided with Somerset. But York, abler and more patient than his rival, gained the upper hand, in spite of the support of king and queen.

Distracted by events, the king fell sick, and

in his bodily weakness lost the balance of his mind. A son was born to him; that hapless boy who was to perish in the civil war.

Queen Marguerite's leaning to the Somerset party tainted her own fair fame, and moved some doubts as to the prince's birth. A rumour buzzed round Windsor Castle; but the imbecile monarch only moped and stared. York's party, if not York himself, denounced the child as spurious; some calling him a changeling, others the spawn of Somerset. All partisans of the duke of York professed to think he was not the king's son, and many of them swore that Somerset's brat should never wear the English crown. When the child was twelve weeks old, Queen Marguerite brought him privately to Windsor Castle, where she hoped the king would know, and own him for his son.

Henry was sitting in his chamber in a sad and gentle posture, clouded and overcome by grief, when Marguerite, with the infant in her arms, arrived. His majesty neither spake nor smiled. No lustre filled his eye. Like Charles of France, his mother's father, Henry was a harmless, innocent imbecile. An idiot could not govern; neither could an infant govern. A regency had been vested in the queen; but Marguerite was a

woman and a foreigner. A man was needed, and that man must be a royal duke. Which royal duke? Marguerite favoured Somerset, and the partisans of York reported that she favoured him out of guilty love. If Henry could be got to own his son, and name a man as regent, Marguerite felt sure of raising Somerset to power. Could he be got to sign? The test would show.

Waiting at the chamber door, Marguerite gave the prince to Buckingham, who took the baby in his arms, and going into the king's cabinet, showed him to the king. No sign was made. Henry sat mute, seeing, yet seeing not. In vain the duke spoke to him of his parental joy; no word of recognition passed his lips. Then Marguerite made a personal attempt. Gliding into the room and taking her infant from the duke, she knelt before the king, her husband, and implored him to give his blessing to their child. Vain, vain, all vain! Tender and silent, but without intelligence, his highness sat. He heard as one who hears nothing. Once only he raised his eyes, which seemed to flutter for a moment on the baby's face, but on the instant they wandered off again. No sound, no smile, betrayed a gleam of consciousness in the king. Marguerite left the

cabinet, aware that she and her partisans must fight their fight alone.

Gloucester being dead, York faced the Somerset faction front to front. The partisans of York were with him; the partisans of Clarence were with him; and to these great parties rallied many of the old Lancastrian lords; all those, in fact, who held with the late king and the late duke of Gloucester that the house of Beaufort was excluded from the throne by law. York counted a majority of votes in parliament; the cardinal was in his grave; and when the fight came on, Somerset, in spite of the remonstrance of his Daisy Queen, was thrown into the Tower.

A party of the victors—Warwick, Oxford, and Shrewsbury, with the bishops of Winchester, Ely, and Chester—came to Windsor Castle (Saturday, the 23rd of March, 1454), with a message from the duke of York and the House of Lords. York was now master at the board, and sent his messages to the royal house as he saw good. Brought into the king's dining-room, where his highness was at dinner, the lords and bishops waited till the trenchers were removed, and then Reginald, bishop of Chester, spake to him.

These lords and bishops, he explained, had

come to Windsor on the part of all the lords spiritual and temporal to present their humble duty to the king, to express their great desire for his health, and to remind him of their great diligence in parliament.

Henry sat blank. The lords whispered amongst themselves apart. It was agreed among them that, whether the king understood or not, Reginald should go on. Then Reginald asked him whom he would please to have for his new primate—whom he would please to have for his new chancellor—whom he would please to have for his new councillors. Mournful and lustreless sat the king. The bishop prayed him, coaxed him, cried good cheer to him. No answering gleam lit up his eye; no answering sentence moved his lip. Wainfleet, bishop of Winchester, then told the king, that as the lords and bishops had not yet dined, they would go to meat and wait on his highness in a little time.

After dinner they came back, and found the king sitting in the same chair. They moved and urged him 'by all the ways and means that they could think to have answer, but they could have none.'

One lord proposed, that the king should be

taken into another room, to see what change of scene might do to rouse him. Servants were called, who lifted him from his chair and led him to his sleeping closet. Nothing came of this device. In vain they asked him whom he would have for his new primate and his new councillors. No word, no sign came back. Then they implored his highness to say whether they should wait on him any longer, so as to give him time for thought. No answer came; and then with sorrowful heart they rode away; convinced, after that third attempt, that parliament must appoint a regent in his stead.

The duke of York was raised to the great offices of president of the council, protector of the king's person, and defender of the realm. A singular and tempting situation has arisen. The legal heir was in possession of all the rights and powers of sovereignty, except the name of king! His chief supporters, Warwick and Salisbury, were appointed to great commands. Somerset was more strictly guarded in the Tower.

But soon a change took place. Under the care of Kemer, dean of Salisbury, an expert in the art of medicine, Henry improved in health. As he improved in health, his mind began to clear. On Christmas day, he spake some words. Two days

later, he sent his almoner from Windsor to Canterbury with an offering to the martyr, and desired his secretaries to lay a present on the altar of St. Edward in Westminster. Marguerite seized her chance. Riding to Windsor Castle with the prince, her infant son, she brought him to the king's cabinet, and put him into the king's arms. Henry understood her. 'What is his name?' he asked. 'Edward,' said the Daisy Queen. Henry, thinking of the Saxon saint, held up his hands and said, 'Thank God for that.'

Henry and Marguerite talked of many things. Henry told the queen that till that time he neither wist what was said to him, nor where he had been when he was sick. Looking at the child again, he asked who were his godfathers, and the queen told him they were Cardinal Kemp and the duke of Somerset. The king replied that he was also glad to hear that one of them was Cardinal Kemp. Marguerite told him that the cardinal was dead. He answered, he had never heard of that before, but if her news was true, one of the wisest lords in his realm was gone.

Reports soon spread abroad that the poor king at Windsor had recovered his reason. Wainfleet, bishop of Winchester, and Botyll, prior of the

order of St. John of Jerusalem, came to speak with him. They found him well, and sane. On leaving his cabinet they were all in tears for joy. He spoke to them like one who had come back from the dead. He said he was in charity with all the world, that he forgave everyone, and he wished his lords to be and do the same. Religious services were his delight. Matins and evensong were said in his chamber, and he heard mass every day in the chapels of St. Edward and St. George.

Queen Marguerite took advantage of this change. Carrying the king to London, she unexpectedly produced him in the House of Peers; where, faint of body, he was strong enough to use his prerogative, and dissolve the sitting parliament. This done, she caused the king to put an end to York's protectorate, and then to liberate the duke of Somerset from the Tower.

York appealed to arms.

Six years of slaughter followed. Henry fell sick again, and with his sickness came insanity. York became protector of the realm a second time. The mask was now thrown off, and York preferred his claim, not only against the bastard line of Beaufort, but against the reigning house of Lancaster. The

battle of St. Albans saw the death of Somerset and the captivity of the king. Then followed Blore Heath, Coventry and Wakefield, where the duke of York was slain.

Edward, his son, now duke of York, was legal heir; so far as right of law depends on birth. Afterwards, came Mortimer's Cross, the second battle of St. Albans, the flight of Henry to the north, and the victorious entry of Edward into Westminster.

Edward of York, the legal heir, was king: but Edward the Fourth was king as Bolingbroke had been king—in right of his swift hand and trenchant sword—rather than as the son of Richard of York, and grandson of Lady Anne de Mortimer.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

UNION OF THE ROSES.

1461-85.

EDWARD the Fourth, on coming to Windsor Castle, cut down his adversary's sword, crest, sash and banner from St. George's Chapel, and set up his own achievements in their place.

Henry of Windsor scarcely understood the state of his affairs. To those who spoke to him about the claims of Edward, duke of York, he answered, like a lawyer arguing from a brief:

'My father was king; his father was also king; I have worn the crown from my cradle upwards for forty years. You have all sworn fealty to me as your sovereign. How then, can my right be brought into debate?'

What the sword had won the sword had lost. Edward, acting in his right, was trying the old question—who could govern England with suc-

cess. If he could rule, his title would be justified. Queen Marguerite proved herself a skilful and audacious partisan. Not wholly in derision, her enemies styled her 'Captain' Marguerite. Riding from town to town—one day at sea, another day on land—the queen was an embodied Energy. Yet the Yorkist arms prevailed. The battle of Towton fixed the crown on Edward's brows. Hexham gave the king, her husband, to the Tower, and the Lancastrian party to the leadership of an unknown child.

That child—the man of destiny—founder of the permanent line of English kings, and ancestor equally of Elizabeth and of Victoria, was of singular origin.

One day, in Kate's apartments at Windsor Castle, a Welsh squire of the body, whose duty was to sentinel her majesty's door, had been required to dance one of his country's dances in presence of the baby king, the queen-mother, and many ladies of her court. This man, named Owen ap-Tudor, was a soldier from the ranks, whose meat and drink had been in his sword. At Agincourt he had stood near the king when the duke of York had fallen under Alençon's battle-axe. Some thought this Owen was the man whose arm

had cut Alençon down. From that time he had been about the court. Too poor to buy his spurs, he had been put into the guard, in which capacity he had waited on the queen. In dancing in her cabinet that day, Owen had slipped his foot, and reeled into her majesty's lap. The queen had only smiled; on which her ladies smiled, but with a difference in the light. Suspicions of a liking for that soldier had been gathering round the queen. Not once, but three or four times, she had left Windsor suddenly, leaving the baby king behind; and, riding with a few attendants, mostly women, to some lonely hunting-lodge or private manor-house, had stayed away for several days. At that time, being regent for her son, she had been able to refuse all record of her doings; but these trips from Windsor Castle to the lonely manor-houses had been kept by Kate and her attendants as secrets from the world. Tudor had been always taken by the queen—on guard. Aught else? Ladies had more than once begged her majesty to be more prudent in her friendships. Owen, they said, was a mere savage, lower in rank than the poorest English yeoman. Catharine had only laughed at them. She was a foreigner, she had retorted, and could hardly understand them. She

had made that trooper master of her wardrobe, a post in which he had been much about her person, since she had to consult him daily on the purchase and arrangement of her silks and flowers.

That dance had betrayed the queen. Driven to make inquiry, the council found that she had given birth to one son at Hadham, to a second son at Hatfield, to a third son at Westminster. On being sought, these boys had all been found; for they were living in convents, under the names of Edmund, Jasper, and Owen Tudor. More recently the queen had borne a daughter, which had died in infancy. The youngest boy, Owen, had been born in the palace, prematurely, and conveyed as soon as he was born into the Abbot's chamber, where, like a common foundling, he had been left with the fathers to be educated for a monk.

Arrested by an order of the council, Kate had been placed in Bermondsey Abbey, while her paramour, Owen ap-Tudor, had been lodged in a felon's cell in Newgate. Owen had been charged with the offence—unknown to him in either law or name—of marrying a crown tenant without a license from the king and council. For the purpose of smiting Owen, the queen-mother had to be regarded as a tenant of the crown. Not a year

elapsed before the proud and beautiful sinner had died at Bermondsey, worn down by grief and shame; professing her penitence on her dying couch; not so much for her conduct with regard to Owen ap-Tudor, but for having disobeyed her royal husband in causing her son Henry to have seen the light of day at Windsor Castle. In her misery of mind, she made a will providing that her body should rest unburied; lying in the public abbey, in an open coffin, near her husband's tomb, but not within his grave; so that every one who came to pray beside the hero's grave might see her skeleton, and muse on the beauty that in life had swollen her heart with so much pride.

Edmund and Jasper had been brought to court, and taken into Henry's favour. Edmund of Hadham had been created earl of Richmond, and Jasper of Hatfield earl of Pembroke. It is rather hoped than known that Catharine had troubled herself about nuptial rites. No evidence of her marriage to Owen ap-Tudor has ever yet been found.

Edmund, earl of Richmond, exhibiting fine talents, had, by Henry's wish, been married to Lady Margaret, only child of John, first duke of Somerset. At twenty, the young man had died,

leaving a widow, and an infant son; the widow, that gracious Lady Margaret, whose name is so sweet to scholars and men of science; the infant son, that Henry of Richmond, who, in spite of all his flaws of birth, became the hope and heir of the whole line of Lancaster.

A brighter and more patient lad than Henry of Richmond never passed through school and college. A mother wise and learned far beyond the rule of women, was about him always; storing his mind with knowledge, tempering his warmth with prudence, and directing his ambition to the loftiest aims. Had the Yorkist princes been as able in the cabinet as in the field, they might have kept this young man down. Nothing but crimes and blunders could have helped him to upset the legal line. Unhappily the three Yorkist princes, king Edward, George of Clarence, and Richard Crookback, though good soldiers, like their father, were capable of any blunder and of every crime. They quarrelled with their supporters, and they quarrelled with each other. Edward fought with Warwick, and Warwick drove Edward beyond the sea. Clarence rebelled against Edward. Crookback murdered Clarence. Edward dealt foully with the Prince of Wales.

Crookback murdered the imprisoned king. The odium of these murders made the fortunes of the rising prince.

When 'Captain' Marguerite became a prisoner to the Yorkists, she was lodged at Windsor Castle, in the royal house, but only for a little while. Thence she was removed to Wallingford, till her ransom had been paid and she returned to France —widowed, childless, and dethroned, the very majesty of woe.

After Warwick's death at Barnet, Edward invited George, archbishop of York, to Windsor Castle, where he got up hunts for him, and made great banquets for him, as though the brother of Warwick were his nearest friend. The primate was in cheer, believing himself restored to grace. Then Edward told him, that he would come and hunt with him at his manor house, called the Moor, for two or three days. Glad of heart, George thanked his majesty for the honour, and rode to London, where he dug up the jewels, plate, and arras which he had hidden after the day of Barnet Field. To make a greater show, the archbishop borrowed from his friends their plate and stuff, all of which he sent to his country house, together with casks of wine for two or three days of princely junketing.

Then he rode off to the Moor, to be in readiness to receive his majesty. But on the eve of his expected visit, a rider came from Windsor Castle with the message that the king desired his lordship's company at the royal house. Suspecting nothing, George set out for Windsor. At the Castle gates, he was arrested on a charge of treason, and committed to the Norman tower; while Sir William Parr and a troop of horse rode over, and took possession of his treasures at the Moor.

King Henry, murdered in the Tower, was carried to Chertsey, and there interred; King Edward denying to the son of Henry of Agincourt a place among the line of English kings. But Henry, 'holy Henry,' as the peasants called him, was already more than half a saint. Chertsey was crowded with his pilgrims, who declared that miracles were performed before his tomb. These stories spread abroad; more and more pilgrims came to Chertsey, and the shires were agitated by the tales they told, as they had never been since the days succeeding to Becket's martyrdom.

To work against these pious pilgrims, Edward enlarged the chapel of St. George at Windsor, and erected in that chapel a niche for an obscure

but very popular 'saint.' Edward the Third had raised a noble shrine; Edward the Fourth laid the foundation for a chapel more than twice the size. Such acts were sure to please the church. Richard, bishop of Salisbury, was appointed master of the works, and under him the edifice was commenced by building an altar for the obscure but popular saint. That 'saint' was Shorne, John Shorne, Sir John or Father John; a priest of North Marston, who had obtained a great repute for pious sorcery—that permitted sort of necromancy which was known as the white magic. Shorne's achievement was that of conjuring the devil into a boot; a pious feat which had been painted on the oriel of his church. A well from which he had drunk, was considered holy, and the water healing, not only to the body, but the soul. On the enclosing wall were written these words:

Sir John Shorne,
A gentleman born,
Conjured the devil into a boot.

North Marston, where the bones of this worthy sorcerer lay, was visited by greater crowds than Chertsey; so that Edward hoped, in bringing those bones to Windsor, and placing them near

the altar of St. George, to draw the crowd of pilgrims from the tomb of holy King Henry to the shrine of Master John Shorne, gentleman born. With this idea, he placed the bones of John Shorne in the beautiful edifice now known as Lincoln chapel, having procured a license from Pope Sextus the fourth, to remove his ashes from North Marston to Windsor Castle.

But the king's intention failed. He could not carry away the holy well, and though the devil's conjuror had many votaries, neither king nor pontiff drew the pilgrims from Chertsey to the chapel of Sir John.

After the death of Edward the Fourth and the murder of Edward the Fifth, Richard the Third, bolder than his elder brother, ordered the abbot of Chertsey, Thomas Pegott, to unearth the 'sanctified' bones, and bring them up to Windsor Castle for interment in the chapel of St. George. In that way he was sure to draw the pilgrims. Pegott obeyed, but with reluctance. The remains were taken up, and borne with cross and pyx from Chertsey abbey to the Castle hill. Pegott, unable to please the king, was lodged by him in the Norman tower, on the stone wall of which he has left his name smeared with a piece of charcoal :

Thomas Pegott,
Abbot of Chertsey.

The date of Father Pegott's imprisonment was August, 1484, and his inscription is the oldest writing on the prison wall.

When the king's remains were brought to Windsor Castle, they were pure and fresh, smelling like a bunch of herbs and flowers. No spices had been used when he was swathed and buried, so that nothing but his incorruptibility accounted for that sweetness—the unerring test of sanctity. His hair was perfect, and his face had that ascetic look which abbots call angelic. Pilgrims followed his remains to Windsor Castle, and the chapel of St. George, still rising course on course, was filled with a devotional crowd. The body was no sooner buried than miraculous cures began. Richard was puzzled; and his policy had failed. The cause of Lancaster was no longer that of a mortal man, so much as that of a celestial saint.

In vain the tyrant caused new murders to be done. In vain he brought his new queen to Windsor, and in vain he coaxed the clergy to his side. In vain he attainted Henry of Richmond, declared his honours forfeited, and drove him from the kingdom, as a former Richard had expelled a former

Henry. Mutinies broke out. Disorder reigned throughout his realm. A young avenger threatened a descent; a second Bolingbroke, but destined for a longer life and a yet higher flight.

At length the cup of that wicked king's iniquities overflowed. Two kings, one queen, five royal dukes, had fallen by his murdering hand. Broken in nerve and bankrupt in repute, he fell on Bosworth Field, leaving his crown to the young prince of Lancaster. Mating with Elizabeth of York, husband and wife came into Windsor Castle as king and queen—red rose and white; closing the age of civil war, and in the name of a united kingdom, taking possession of St. George's chapel and the royal house.

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